



A detail of the southwestern corner and western wall of the house of St. Peter.

The House of Saint Peter at Capharnaum

V. Corbo

PUBLICATIONS OF THE STUDIUM BIBLICUM FRANCISCANUM

Collectio minor No. 5

The House of St. Peter at CAPHARNAUM

A preliminary report of the first two campaigns of excavations.

April 16 — June 19, Sept. 12 — Nov., 26, 1968.

By

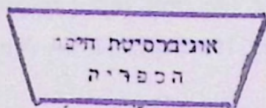
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Translated from Italian by

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Franciscan Printing Press
Jerusalem
1969

DS
110
.K₂ C6313



Nihil obstat: Hierosolymis, die 14 Julii, 1969
Fr. BELLARMINO BAGATTI, O.F.M.,
Censor deputatus.

Imprimi potest: Hierosolymis die 28 Julii, 1969
Fr. HERMINIUS RONCARI, O.F.M., Cust. T. S.

Imprimatur: Hierosolymis 29/7/69
† ALBERTUS GORI O.F.M., Patriarcha

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INTRODUCTION

At the close of the 19th centenary of the death of the holy Apostles, Saints Peter and Paul, the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land desired to revive the memory of the prince of the apostles in the Holy Places of the Sea of Tiberias by promoting archaeological excavations at Tabgha around the rock of the conferring of the primacy and at Capharnaum at the traditional site of his house. The archaeological excavation of Tabgha was directed and illustrated by Father Stanislaus Loffreda, O.F.M., of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum of the Flagellation, Jerusalem. Of the excavation at Capharnaum, which we ourselves directed, we give here a brief preliminary report.

PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS

One can say that until the dawn of the present century Capharnaum no longer existed. It was buried under an immense stratum of ruins, covered with the earth of the fields and with vegetation consisting of shrubs and rank thistles characteristic of this hot region. In fact the bitter words of our Lord addressed to his city on the lake have been fulfilled: "And thou, Capharnaum, shalt thou be exalted to heaven? Thou shalt be thrust down to hell." (Luke 10,15). In this uncultivated country a tribe of Bedouins led a poor life; they continued to damage the few ruins of the synagogue which were still visible. In 1894 the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land, through the untiring efforts of Brother Giuseppe M. Baldi succeeded in redeeming the vast area of ruins by purchasing them in a normal way. From then on Capharnaum slowly began to arise from the abyss in which it had been buried by men and the elements.

The first excavations at Capharnaum were made by the Deutsche Orientgesellschaft. They were directed by the professors H. Kohl and C. Watzinger. In a few weeks they were able to explore the central nave and the eastern aisle of the synagogue, whilst in the western aisle the investigations were limited to three soundings. The Custody of the Holy Land,

which had permitted the German society to make these researches, immediately afterwards continued these investigations on its own account. The direction was intrusted to Brother Wendelin Hinterkeuser, O.F.M., who not only completed the

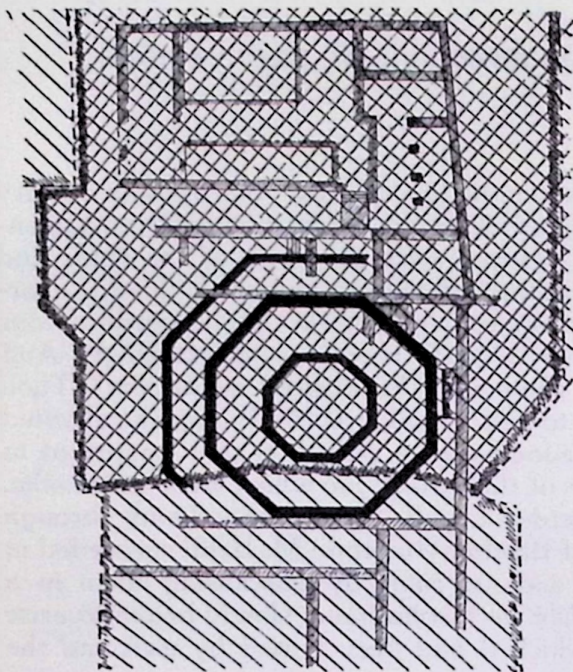


Fig. 1. Plan of the excavation of the octagon in 1921. From the volume of Father ORFALI.

clearance of the western aisle of the synagogue, but extended the clearance to the entire zone to the west of the synagogue. Also the eastern courtyard of the synagogue was discovered by Brother Wendelin. These excavations which began in 1905 had to be stopped in the beginning of 1914 by the outbreak of the first world war.

In the final period Brother Wendelin had brought to light also the southern side of a polygonal edifice to the south of the synagogue. Unfortunately Brother Wendelin did not leave any report of his excavations. During the war period the archaeological researches were suspended completely.

On the 12th of May, 1921, the excavations were again resumed at Capharnaum. The direction of the work was entrusted by the Custody to Father Gaudence Orfali, O.F.M. The campaign lasted until October. The work began exactly where it had been interrupted by Brother Wendelin, namely, on the south side of the polygonal building, at a short distance from the synagogue. On that occasion almost the entire area of an octagonal building with three concentric rings was found; it was still decorated with remains of mosaic pavements. The excavation was then extended northwards to discover possible connections between the octagon and the synagogue. Only habitations were found "without special archaeological importance."¹ The last phase of the excavation was dedicated to the opening of a trench on the eastern side of the courtyard of the synagogue.

In the following years Father Orfali busied himself with the restoration of the synagogue until in 1926 he prematurely became a victim of a road accident. In regard to Capharnaum Father Orfali left a beautiful monograph in large quarto.² In

¹ See the work of Father ORFALI, p. 16, indicated in the following note.

² GAUDENCE ORFALI, O.F.M., *Capharnaum et ses ruines*, Paris, 1922. The work will be cited from now on with the abbreviation ORFALI. Other information regarding Capharnaum and regarding the occasional excavations made by Father A. GASSI, O.F.M., in the zone of the octagon and the synagogue (for example regarding the finding of the apse of the church) is furnished by Father B. BAGATTI, O.F.M., in his article *Oggetti inediti di Cafarnao* in *Liber Annuus* XIV, 1964, pp. 261-272.

this work a great part of the material refers to the synagogue (pp. 21-101); only a short chapter is dedicated to the study of the octagon (pp. 103-109). Moreover the illustrations of the same are very few: one general view, one plan (plate XI) and a reproduction in color (plate XII) of two quite secondary motifs of the mosaic of the central octagon. In this way very

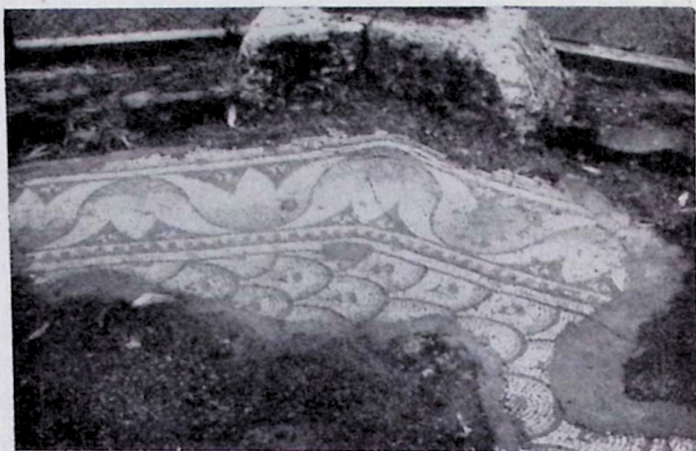


Fig. 2. Detail of the mosaic of the central octagon (photo. by Father BAGATTI).

many details were lost which could have shed light on the rest of the mosaics and perhaps on the architectural upper part of the Byzantine church.

Some fifty years after the excavations of Father Orfali the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land has assigned to the writer the task of restoring the remaining mosaics and of making new excavations in the lower parts of the zone of the octagonal church and its dependencies.

THE NEW ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS

Already above we noted that the new archaeological researches around the octagon of Capharnaum happen to coincide with the close of the nineteenth century of the death of the holy apostles Peter and Paul; they could not be put off any longer owing to the state of the mosaics discovered by Father Orfali in the center of the octagon and in the area of the portico on the north and the northwest sides. Owing to the inclemencies of the weather to which the mosaics had been exposed for many years these ancient pavements of the Byzantine church were deteriorating and were becoming more and more decomposed. It had become indispensable to put them on new beds after they had been detached from the old ones whose mortar was now disintegrating. This first task of detachment was effected on the 16th-18th of April and in this way the archaeological exploration of the subsoil was prepared; the work lasted till June 19th.

After the mosaic of the central octagon had been removed it was established that the tesserae rested on two centimeters of mortar of white lime. The layer below, however, had been made of rather poor mortar with little lime, and of sand from rivers or the seashore and of gravel. This layer varied in thickness between 8 and 10 cms. and rested directly on a thick filling of red earth from the fields. It was precisely this filling which produced the sinking of the mosaic, because this type of red earth is subject to compression. Father Orfali who was not familiar with the subsoil of the mosaic could not easily understand the sinking of the mosaic which was by no means uniform, and, therefore, since he believed that the depression had been deliberately made by the mosaicists, he called it the

font of a baptistery.³ Moreover the learned Father overlooked the conclusion which he should have drawn from the not indifferent load of debris found on the mosaic at the time of the excavation and from the stratum of tiles which had fallen from the roof of the octagon from no mean height.⁴



Fig. 3. Detail of the peacock which forms the wheel in the mosaic of the central octagon (photo by Father BAGATTI).

The mosaic of the north and the northwest sides of the portico has larger tesserae and these rested on a layer of white mortar 2 cms. thick; below it there is another rather compact layer of white mortar with stones and sand; its thickness is

³ ORFALI, p. 107.

⁴ ORFALI, p. 16.

about 8 cms. This layer rested on a mass of basalt stones. Also in this zone an almost homogeneous depression in the entire central part of the mosaic was caused by the accumulation of debris; this was not the case along the sides owing to the presence of the foundation walls which became wider below the mosaic and formed a ledge which was an unyielding support for the bed of the mosaic.

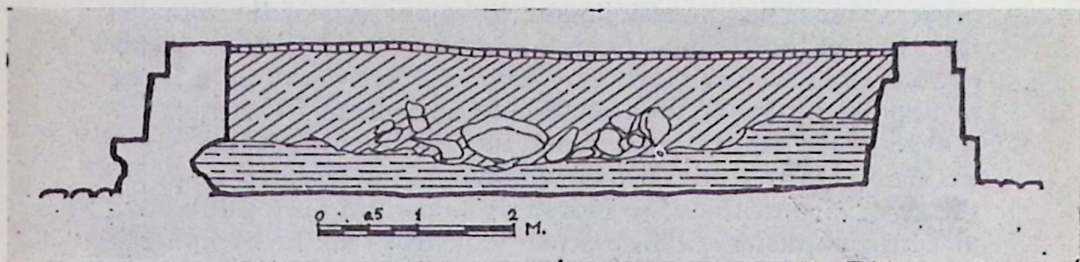


Fig. 4. Section of the levels in the central octagon up to the pavement of the house church. On top the mosaic; diagonal lines: red earth; horizontal lines: the level of the graffiti.

The following study regarding the structure of the Byzantine church was made possible solely by the removal of these mosaics and by an accurate study of all the levels of the subsoil. This excavation has permitted us to make a precise plan of the entire octagonal church which at first we knew only inaccurately and also not completely.⁵

⁵ It will be sufficient to make a comparison between ORFALI, plate XI and the plans which we are publishing in this report.

I. THE BYZANTINE CHURCH

(The first half of the 5th century).

(To follow the description keep plan I before your eyes.)

The study of the Byzantine church erected on the house of St. Peter is necessarily limited to an analysis of the foundations and of those elements on the surface found in the previous excavations, which, moreover, have reached us after a lapse of about fifty years. We must note immediately that also for the so-called upper part, from the pavement upwards, our excavation has made a contribution in the eastern zone by the discovery of the apse (formerly known in part) and above all of the baptistery. This discovery destroys all the hypotheses which were previously proposed^{*} and establishes with certainty, if that were necessary, the exclusive Christian character of the edifice: a church of a central plan with two complete concentric octagons and an octagonal portico which is incomplete on the north, west and south sides. On the east there is an apsidal baptistery with two dependencies on the sides in the form of sacristies. Of this Byzantine edifice we now have secure knowledge in its entirety from the recent excavation, by it also the chronological problem is solved with certainty.

^{*} For example the whole hypothesis of the octagonal baptistery developed by ORFALI, ch. VI, pp. 106-109. From ORFALI were taken over with much superficiality notices of the work *Capernaum* of B. SAPIR and D. NE'EMAN, Tel Aviv, 1967. What scientific value can a plan of the church (fig. 29) have which was excogitated at a desk and worse still the perspective reconstruction of the brain (fig. 13) in which the poor octagon becomes the fountain of the public square in front the synagogue?

Before proceeding with our analysis it is well to recall what the first explorers saw of this edifice. Father Orfali saw a triple concentric octagon whose extremities along the middle axis measured 22,50 m.; the intermediate octagon measured 6,90 m. on each of its sides and that in the center 3,30 m. Father Orfali noted that he found the walls of the central octagon destroyed down to the foundations (it would be better to read down to the level of the mosaics!); only three beautiful white limestones were still *in situ* on the north and northeast sides and another at the west corner.⁷

These remains enabled us to fix the thickness of the wall at 50 cm. For the rest of the edifice Father Orfali presumed that it was all in white stone like the few remains of the pilasters of the central octagon and that therefore the basalt walls represent a later rebuilding. Of the primitive construction there would have remained *in situ* only three sills of doors and some stone in the wall on the east.

For the walls of the third ring Father Orfali thought that, while traces of it exist on the north, northwest and west, for the other sides the walls of this third ring were replaced by more modern constructions.

Another notice, which is precious for us, is given by Father Orfali in chap. II where he gives the story of the dig and speaks of the central octagon; namely, that on the mosaic pavement there was found a layer of tiles and rare fragments of marble, mixed with remains of constructions and that on the tiles there was a seal in the form of O.⁸

This is all the information, which is little enough, that we have regarding the walls from the old excavation of the octagon.

⁷ ORFALI, p. 104.

⁸ ORFALI, p. 16.

THE BYZANTINE CHURCH IN THE LIGHT OF THE NEW EXCAVATIONS

The church in its present form, after the recent excavations, has a typical physiognomy. Even if there still remain some elements to be cleared up as regards the dating of the apse and the baptistry, the church in itself represents one of the most ancient models, if not the most ancient existing in Palestine, of a centralized plan based on concentric octagons and a portico.

The plan.— The Christian church of Capharnaum is represented by an edifice with a centralized plan of octagonal form. Two concentric octagons form the church properly speaking: the central octagon is based on eight pilasters, probably crowned by arches, which were the bases of a drum \times which supported a roof protected on the exterior by tiles. There are no elements from which to conclude whether the central octagon was higher than its ring and hence whether the windows were arranged in the upper part of the surrounding walls of the ring or rather in the arches of the central octagon. Three doors gave access to the church from the west, northwest and southwest sides; the sills which we found removed had been seen *in situ* by Father Orfali. * Another door not noted by Orfali is still *in situ* on the southeast side; by it the church communicated with the sacristies or dependencies on the southeast.

From the octagonal church one did not reach the outside directly but came into a portico with five sides which also has

* ORFALI, p. 104.

an octagonal plan on the north, northwest, west, southwest and south sides. The eastern side of the church, from the end of the portico, was occupied by sacristies and dependencies on



Fig. 5. General view of the excavation of the Byzantine octagon from the south (photo by the author).

two sides. The apse was constructed in a later period and in it the baptistery was arranged.

In the original plan of the octagonal church there was neither an apse nor a baptistery on the eastern side. The

octagon was completely independent of wall ee, in plan I, of the Jewish Christians. This more ancient wall was used by the Byzantine architect as a support for the dependencies of the church. When in the second campaign we were able to complete the excavation of the entire zone to the east of the octagon, we discovered at a level of about 78 cm. below the baptistery a plaster pavement of which we had found a portion in the southwest corner of the sacristy 10 on the south. The excavation proved the existence of the same pavement in the sacristy 12 on the north. So the plan of the two dependencies or sacristies of the church is clearer. From the church one descended by four or five steps into the two dependencies on the north and south, which were united together by a small corridor behind the eastern wall of the octagon.

In a later period the passage or corridor was filled in by the block no. 11 of the baptistery and a section of the wall of the sacred precinct of the Jewish Christians was inclosed by the walls of the apse constructed against the outer side of the inclosing wall.

The plan of the octagon on the northeast is destroyed by locus 2a in plan I; this locus of a still indeterminable nature is later than the Byzantine church into whose subsoil it was inserted after removing the foundation of the octagon.

Pavements.— The pavements of the church have reached us in a fragmentary condition. If one looks at the plan of the church published by Father Orfali ¹⁰ one can see besides the mosaic of the central octagon nine other fragments of the mosaic pavements in the central ring and important remains of the mosaic of the portico on the north and northwest sides and lesser remains on the west and southwest. Of all these

¹⁰ ORFALI, plate XI.

remains of mosaic which have not been illustrated and not sufficiently documented by Father Orfali or by others after him, there remain today in a rather damaged state: 1) the pavement of the central octagon; 2) a single fragment of the mosaic of the central ring; 3) of the mosaic of the portico, the large piece along the north and northwest walls.



Fig. 5a. General view of the excavation of the Byzantine octagon from the east (photo by the author).

Whilst in the mosaic of the central octagon and in that of the portico the technique is the original one, in the fragment of the concentric ring on the east and northeast sides we have, on the contrary, a partial repair with larger tesserae, although

the design is inspired by the older one. As to the size of the tesserae we can note that those of the central octagon and of the fragment of the central ring are rather small and the technic of the beds is identical, as we have already noted above; ¹¹ the tesserae of the mosaic of the portico are larger and the beds are firmer, perhaps because they were exposed to the weather. In freeing the tesserae from the lime bed we noted that the mortar (which was excellent at certain points) had become one block with the tesserae.

As to the motifs of the mosaics we may indicate that the one of the portico, consisting of large rosettes, is very similar in its technique to the mosaic of the narthex of the church of the Multiplication of the loaves at Tabgha; the floral motif of the concentric ring has a certain resemblance to the mosaics of the same church of Tabgha especially in the technique of the lotus flower. That which is somewhat more original is the mosaic of the central ring of the octagon where a rich octagonal band of large flowers in the form of a chalice delimits the central field with a scale motif decorated with florets. In the center of the mosaic there is a circle formed by a rainbow which incloses a peacock which forms a wheel. Unfortunately the mosaic is broken at the place of the head and the feet of the bird.

The motif of the peacock is well known in Christian iconography as a symbol of immortality. I wish to underline

¹¹ See above the section on THE NEW ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION. The peacock, the symbol of immortality, occurs often in mosaics, but in the type in which it is seen from the side and generally confronted by a second peacock. For this type see various examples reported by AVI-YONAH, *Mosaic Pavements in Palestine*, QDAP III, p. 62. The motif of the peacock that forms a wheel is more rare, but parallels are not wanting, as at Jerash in the church of St. George (6th century). See C. H. KRAELING, *Gerasa, City of the Decapolis*. New Haven, 1938, plate 72 c.

that the presence of this mosaic in the center of the octagon absolutely excludes any thought of a baptistery on account of the technic in which the mosaic and its beds were executed, which could not have resisted the presence of water. Neither was any trace of a base of an altar found in the central octagon; this must probably be sought in the concentric ring towards the east side.

The motif of the scales is too common in the mosaics of Palestine to make it desirable to institute comparisons here. It is, however, worth while to underline a certain resemblance in style to the mosaic of the nearby church of Tabgha to suggest a contemporaneity or at least the commonalty of the school of artisans of mosaic in the region.

Buildings of the octagonal plan are not wanting in the Byzantine period in Palestine; but these, in comparison with our monument, are rather late. The only more ancient example could be the octagon of the church of Bethlehem, if it could be proved to have existed.¹² Father Orfali indicated as a parallel the octagon of the Ascension on the Mount of Olives at Jerusalem;¹³ but after our excavation astraddle this sanc-

¹² For the octagon of Bethlehem, for the description of the excavation, see E. T. RICHMOND, *Basilica of the Nativity. Discovery of the Remains of an Earlier Church*, in QDAP III, plate 36. Regarding the interpretation of these incomplete and not always clear finds, which provided an occasion for certain archaeologists for reconstructing an octagon and an *oculus* (eye), see the detailed examination by B. BAGATTI, O.F.M., in *Gli antichi edifici sacri di Betlemme*, Jerusalem, 1932, in chap. I, but especially pp. 33-35.

¹³ See V. C. CORBO, O.F.M., *Ricerche archeologiche al Monte degli Ulivi*, Jerusalem, 1965, where we report on our excavation of a section of the round church of the fourth century, pp. 97-105. The church with the octagonal plan at the Ascension is entirely medieval. It is unfortunate that the famous plan of a Byzantine church with an octagonal plan (which does not exist!) in *Jerusalem nouvelle* (p. 361) of Fathers VINCENT & ABEL, O.P., found its way, along with some others of this kind, into popular works where we will see it

tuary it is to be hoped that certain theories have disappeared forever. Some comparison, though somewhat late, could be instituted with the octagon of the mosque of Omar in Jerusalem or with the church of the Theotokos on Garizim. But since these examples are of later date than our church at Capharnaum they do not shed light on our problem. We are convinced that our octagon at Capharnaum, if we are not making a mistake, is the oldest example known in Palestine of a church with a central plan based on two concentric octagons and with a portico on five sides.

We could give a hint of the technical problem of the roof of the octagon if the elements found in the first excavation had been more abundant. From the stratum of tiles found on the central octagon by Father Orfali one can imagine a roof of tiles supported on woodwork. The thickness of the walls of the entire octagon without any counterfort does not permit us to think of a roof of stone.

THE DATE OF THE CENTRALIZED CHURCH OF CAPHARNAUM

Until now we do not have any precise elements for reaching an exact date of the church of Capharnaum. However some observations may be helpful for arriving at an approximate date.

1) All the coins found in the final occupation of the area buried beneath the foundations of the octagon do not extend beyond the end of the fourth century or the beginning of the

perpetuated for who knows how long! See J.W. CROWFOOT, *Early Churches in Palestine*, London, 1941, pp. 90 ff.; A. GRABAR, *Byzantium, from the Death of Theodosius to the Rise of Islam*, translated by STUART GILBERT & JAMES EMMONS, France, 1966, pp. 54 and 356, fig. 430 (plan).

fifth. This element is rather precious for finding the right orientation for solving the question of the date, since it is derived from an examination of the monument itself.

2) The dates of tradition are derived from three texts; that of the Anonymous writer from Piacenza, that of Peter the deacon and that of St. Epiphanius.

The Anonymous from Piacenza who wrote in 570 A.D. makes it clear that on the house of St. Peter there is now ("modo") a church. The expression is too vague to enable us to determine a fixed point of time; it is rather an affirmation of a fact existing at that time. The testimony reported by Peter the deacon is anterior to the construction of the church over the house of Peter. The text which he has is ascribed by critics to Egeria. Here we are confronted by the problem of the dating of the famous pilgrimage to which various dates have been assigned. The most recent studies today date the itinerary to the years 381-384,¹⁴ whilst others insist on the period at the beginning of the fifth century.

3) A difficulty against such a late date could be represented by a passage of St. Epiphanius in *Panarion* (written between 374 and 377) in which he relates that the converted count Joseph of Tiberias had obtained permission from Constantine the Great to construct various churches in Galilee, of which one was to be in Capharnaum. But the text does not say if or when he succeeded in building the church at Capharnaum.

¹⁴ Recently Father DEVOS, S. J., in *Analecta Bollandiana* 85 (1967), p. 178, has again proposed the date of BAUMSTARK in the year 383. According to DEVOS Egeria arrived in Jerusalem for Easter in 381. Father BAGATTI, O.F.M., in *Bibbia ed Oriente* 1968, p. 75, assigns the pilgrimage to the years 408-410. The strongest argument of Father BAGATTI is the one regarding the question of the new church of Sion built by the Patriarch John, which brings us to the period between the years 387 and 417.

From the pilgrimage of Egeria we must conclude that she did not see the octagonal church since it did not yet exist; she says that she saw the house of St. Peter as it was, but converted into a church (his house is the church). The coins found in the latest levels of this house belong mostly to the fourth century, only one or the other to the fifth. These suggest that the pilgrimage of Egeria could have been as late as the fifth century, (which is the date indicated by Father Bagatti).

At the end of the fourth century and in the beginning of the fifth century the house of St. Peter still existed; it had been converted into a church. Therefore the construction of the octagonal church should have taken place between the beginning of the fifth century and the year 570, for in 570 the octagonal church already existed according to the testimony of the pilgrim of Piacenza.

Since in the strata of the house converted into a church there are no coins of the late 5th century nor those of the sixth, I think that we can quite safely date the octagonal church of Capharnaum to the middle of the fifth century.

ANALYSIS OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE WALLS OF THE CHURCH

The observations which we shall make regarding the construction of the walls of the octagonal church, in general concern only the foundations of the building; we should note once for all that the highest part of the foundation, except perhaps the external wall of the portico, is already finished in a way that can give one a good idea of the structure of the walls of the edifice as they should have been above the level of the pavements.

The structure of the inner sides of the walls of the central octagon. The foundations of the central octagon are preserved

real well to a height varying between 196 cm. (on the north side and at the northeast corner) and 130 cm. (on the south side); in general the walls of the foundation average about 160 cm. The walls of the foundation are quite regular, especially the higher parts. In the lower parts (from 20 to about 60 cm.) there are irregularities of the lines on the northeast and southeast sides and in the west and southwest corners. The walls of the remaining sides to the height of 130 cm. are quite regular with a tendency to round off the corners. The

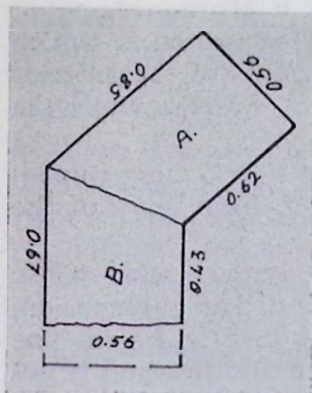


Fig. 6. A sketch of the northeastern pier of the central octagon.

upper part of the foundation neatly divided from the lower part by a projection in the wall, is already almost perfect because it is destined to continue the visible part of the wall (that is, above the level of the mosaics) there remain *in situ* only three stones of the pilasters in the western corner (south-west side) and in that of the north and northeast; others were found out of place. These stones are of white *mizzi* (a hard crystalline limestone)¹⁴² of the same type as the three sills

¹⁴² See G. S. BLAKE, *The Stratigraphy of Palestine and its Building Stones*, Jerusalem, 1935, pp. 106 f., 109 f.

and as the stone used in the construction of the nearby synagogue. The dressing, at least in as far as it can be observed on the exterior face, was done by strokes of the *shahuta* (a kind of axe for cutting stones) with fine teeth. The height of the courses of these stones of the existing pilasters varies between 33-37 cm. (on the north side) and 40 cm. on the south side. The two stones of the pilaster of the north corner (which are carefully cemented to the foundation and hence safely *in situ* indicate that the central octagon was supported by pilasters at the eight corners. Fig. 6 reproduces what remains of the pilaster at the northern corner; stone A, which is the best preserved, gives the measurements of the exterior side of the pilaster which should be 85×85 cm., while the inner side should average near 62×62 cm.

The stone of the pilaster of the west side is more ruined; its dressing is of the same type as that of the pilaster of the north.

The walls of the foundation of the central octagon are made from irregular blocks of black basalt of every dimension, cemented with excellent mortar of white lime and with fine gravel of basalt. The foundation of the central octagon is not autonomous, but rests on the pavement of the house church on the north and south sides and on the walls of the venerated house of St. Peter on the west, east, south and north for the external sides as also on the walls of the house church on the internal sides on the north and south.

The thickness of the entire wall of the foundation averages around 60 cm. The measurements of the internal sides of the octagon, beginning on the north and proceeding towards the east, are the following: 277, 280, 272, 275, 278, 274, 281 and 280 cm.

The foundation of the central octagon on the exterior.
The external face of the foundation of the central octagon

(which looks towards the concentric ring) has more or less the same characteristics. as the inner face. The highest part (for about 40 cm.) is the more regular and rests on a somewhat wider projection of the wall, varying in width from a minimum of 5 cm. to a maximum of 30 cm. on the southeast side. This projection of the wall continues at a height of 70 cm. around the south, southwest, southeast and northwest sides, of 95 cm. on the east and 60 cm. on the northeast. This second section of the foundation rests on another still wider section, but its direction and contour become less precise as it descends towards the base. This third section of the foundation is not always an original wall, but it often consists of older walls which support it; so on the west, southwest and northwest this base is formed by walls of the partially destroyed house of St. Peter; on the north side there is in part the wall of the house church; on the east side there is in part the wall of the house church and in part that of the house of St. Peter; on the southeast side and on the south there are in part walls of the house church and in part those of the house of St. Peter.

As a general criterion one can say that almost everywhere the foundation of the Byzantine church gradually becomes wider as it descends towards the base.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE WALLS OF THE FOUNDATION OF THE CONCENTRIC RING OF THE OCTAGON

The foundation of the wall of the concentric ring of the octagon is well preserved everywhere except on the northeast side where the foundation was cut through its entire depth by the small room 2a in plan I, which is of late date. Also this foundation of the concentric ring has special characteristics which it is worth while to examine.

The foundation of this ring is preserved to a height varying between 110 and 130 cm.; only in the sector on the

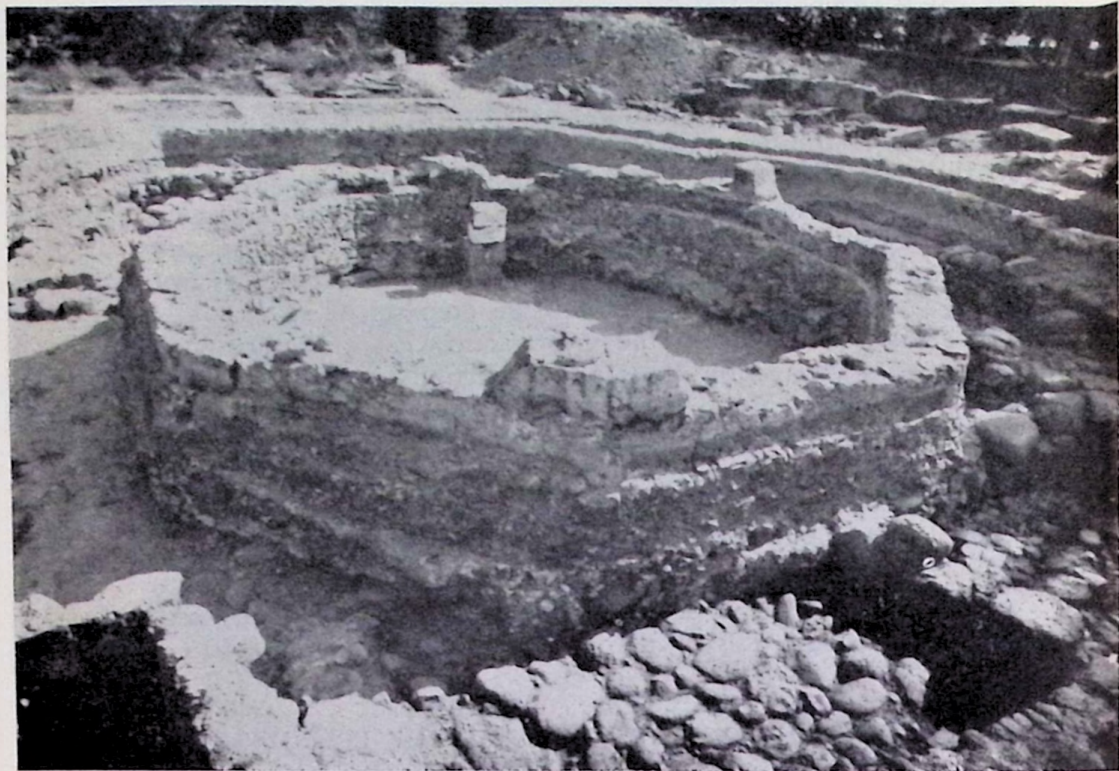


Fig. 7. A view of the central octagon of the habitations of the first century and of the house church (photo of the author).

east and southeast it reaches 160 to 170 cm. In the foundations (on the inner side) two zones can be distinguished: the one at the bottom whose course is irregular (the height varies between

70 and 90 cm.) and at times rests on more ancient walls; and the one on top formed from well aligned masonry and in general is covered with rough plaster with channels or im-

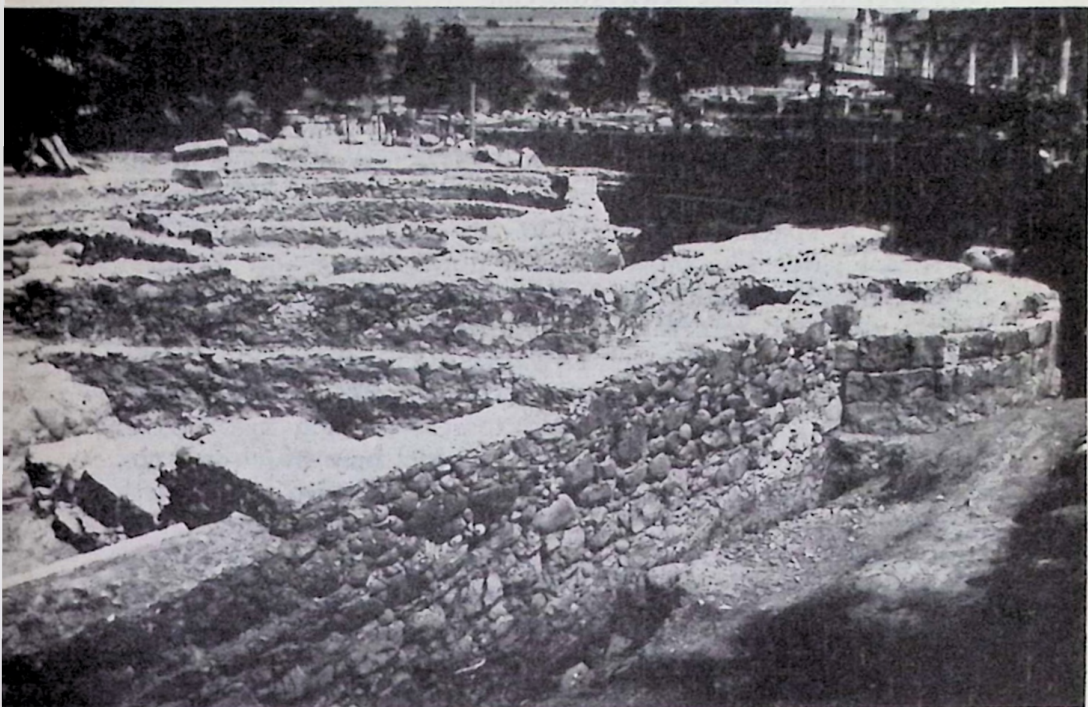


Fig. 8. A view of the Byzantine basilica from the southeast with the apse and the baptistery in the foreground built against the eastern wall of the sacred enclosure of the Jewish Christians (photo of the author).

pressions from the bottom of the trowel. This zone is preserved to a height of 48 cm. on the west, 40-70 cm. on the northwest,

45 cm. on the north, about 80 cm. on the east and southeast. 45 cm. on the south and 60-65 cm. on the southwest.

The width of the wall of the foundation at the highest part averages almost always 60 cm.

The foundation on the east side. The wall of the foundation on this side is visible for only about $2\frac{1}{2}$ m. on the inner face; against the outer face there is the block with the baptismal font and the levelling of the apse, and against the remaining portion of the inner face there is a fragment of the mosaic which decorated the entire concentric ring. The mosaic occupies a space of 130 x 390 cm. beginning against the northeast side. The mosaic has a floral theme and its lotus flowers recall, as we have already stated, the mosaic of Tabgha. It has about 10 tesserae in a line of 10 cm. The colors are white, red, azure and rose. Towards the northeast corner the mosaic was restored; the same motif was preserved (the work was rougher); the restorer used tesserae which are a little larger. The mosaic rests on a bed of white lime which is 2 cm. thick and this rests on a foundation of stones and white earth about 6 cm. thick; there the white plaster is almost dissolved. Below this bed there is a subfoundation of rocks and large stones mixed with white earth about 30 cm. thick; still lower there is a stratum of red earth of the fields (30-40 cm. thick) down to the wall of the atrium of the house church.

The foundation of the northeast side. This section of the ring presents the same characteristics as the other sections with a rough zone below and a rather well finished one on top. On this side we have only two pieces of the foundation, because the central part was destroyed, by the insertion of locus 2a in plan I, which was perhaps a reservoir; its bottom is about 170 cm. beneath the level of the nearby mosaic. This so-called reservoir is not very regular; the walls on the east measure 270 cm. in height, on the west 240, on the south 183 and on the

north 194. It was constructed from irregular blocks whose surface was made even by means of good plaster. The locus was built by working on the inside against the Byzantine filling of the octagon after the foundation of the wall of the perimeter of the octagon had been cut when this had already been destroyed and by supporting itself against the northeast end of wall 3 of the house church (see plan III, 3).

On the other sides of the concentric ring the foundations did not present special aspects besides those which we noted; only on the west side the lower part rests on dry walls of the habitations of the first century.

THE APSE AND BAPTISTERY OF THE BYZANTINE OCTAGONAL CHURCH

The apse and the baptistery, in the form in which they were found, represent a later addition to the plan of the octagonal Byzantine church. Originally neither the apse nor the baptistery existed. In fact the original construction on the east stopped at the concentric ring of the octagon and at wall ee in plan I. Between wall ee and the wall of the concentric ring there was a passage on a lower level than the pavements of the church between the sacristies 10 and 12 which have a plaster floor, found 95 cm. below the level of the little piazza which surrounds the baptismal font. Therefore the baptismal font 11 in plan I was built later blocking the passage between the 2 sacristies 10 and 12 forming instead the apse with radii of 310 cm. from the external wall of the concentric ring of the octagon. Then wall ee was buried to form a base on the east side of the font and around it a mass of stone and lime was formed (with a thickness of about 70 cm.) which inclosed the basin of the font. Against the outer side of wall ee the masonry of the semi-circular apse was built.

The external wall of the apse differs from all the walls of the octagon in this that it consists of slightly drafted basalt

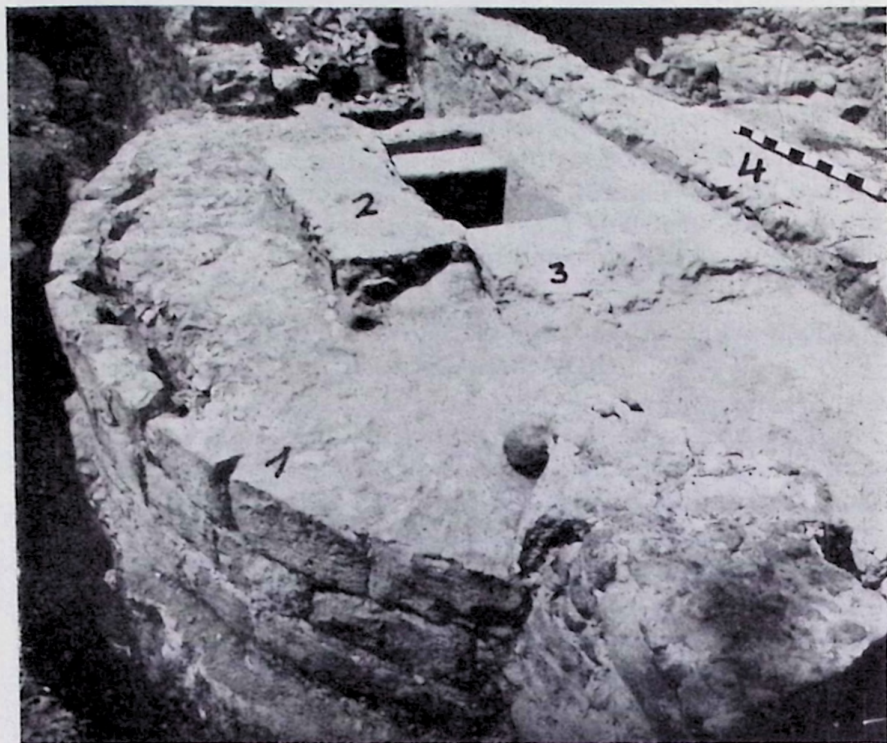


Fig. 9. View of the apse (1), of the baptistery (3), of the wall of the octagon (4) and of the wall of the sacred enclosure (2) (photo of the author).

blocks, but arranged in regular courses. In its actual state it preserves only three courses above a rather rough cement foundation (which is about 80 cm. high) which rests upon

earth and so differs clearly from wall 1 which has very accurate and deep foundations. The courses of the apse from below upwards measure 30,30 and 32 cm.

The baptismal font is on the center of the axis of wall ee to the east and of that of the octagon on the west. The fixture consists of a square basin which measures 68 by 70 cm. on the sides; it is 48 cm. deep and had two steps at the north and south ends; in the southwest corner there is an opening of about 15 cm. in the thickness of the wall for a drain. From the platform around the font one could reach the basin by means of two steps; the tread of the first is preserved; it measures 31 cm.; and of the second, part of the rise remains. The wall of the font is made of stones and excellent mortar consisting of white lime and small basalt gravel, whilst the plaster, which is applied with great precision and carefully smoothed, is of white lime and sand. Between the platform of the font and the wall of the octagon there was a small passage like a channel (35 cm. wide) made with plaster. On the north side of the platform of the font there was a somewhat lower pavement made of plaster of white lime.

We do not have sufficient elements to determine when the baptistery was added to the octagonal church, thus blocking the passage between the two sacristies. The only orienting element is the discovery in a cleft of the step on the south of a tiny coin, whose form suggests the period between the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century. In the region of the lake I call attention to the baptistries of Beth-Yerah and Hippos; these, however, are independent chapels.¹⁵

¹⁵ For the baptistery of Beth-Yerah see P. DELOUGAZ and R. C. HAINES, *A Byzantine Church at Khirbat al-Karak, The University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications LXXXV*, 1960, pp. 23, 24,54; for the one at Hippos see B. BAGATTI, O.F.M., in *Terra Santa*, 1968, pp. 359 ff.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE PORTICO OF THE OCTAGONAL CHURCH

The portico of the church exists on five sides of the octagon; it begins near the western wall of room 13 in plan I and ends near a corresponding line on the south side. The portico had a width of 2,50 m. The better preserved sides, which have revealed its physiognomy, are those on the north and northwest; the sides on which not only the mosaic pavements have been preserved, but also the vast sills, distributed between the pilasters, still exist. Between the white stones of these sills there are ruined pilasters in the north and northwest corners. The sill of the north side measures 6,20 m., that of the northwest side about 6,70 m. On the other sides the foundation is preserved on a level which is lower than the sills and therefore there are no longer any traces either of the sills or of the pilasters. In plan I we have suggested also the pilasters of the other three sides in order to have a more complete idea of the portico, but in reality we have not found traces of them in our excavations.

Regarding the technic of these foundations we note that they have received a little less care than those of other parts of the church; the reason is easy to understand because the aforesaid foundations of the portico were not destined to carry a corresponding load. However the walls are made in the same technic and in the same material; only in the upper part the finer zone is missing. We have, however, noted that the inner face on the west side is almost completely plastered. Furthermore the walls of the portico encountered more ancient walls on which they rest, as was the case in the other foundations of the church. This happened in the north corner, in the northwest corner no. 14b, in plan I, and on the south and south-east sides.



Fig. 10. View of the structures of the northwestern side of the church with remains of the habitations of the first century (photo of the author).

The west side of the foundation of the portico surprised us by its finishing and by its more ordered walls and regular plastered surface; we did not, however, know how to explain the rude change of the walls in the northwestern corner; these were neglected and hurriedly finished. Since in the first campaign of excavation we had stopped against this internal face of the foundation of the portico, we thought of clarifying these problems somewhat better in the second campaign, especially since in making the plan of the excavation we also noted a slight deviation in the line of the foundation towards the south, where there was a difference of more than 40 cm. in respect to the northwest corner. In the second campaign the problem was fully cleared up. In fact the architect of the church had found before him one of the two western walls of the sacred precinct of the Jewish Christians and he used it as a support for the western side of the portico. And since the wall of the sacred precinct had that deviation in its direction (as we noted above), he established the parallel alignment with the octagon by erecting a wall of 40 cm. nearby on the exterior face of the wall of the Jewish Christians. Also the rough transition of the wall noted in the northwest corner was explained, because there is question of the extremity of the wall of the Jewish Christians and the complement made against it by the Byzantine architect. With this builder's foresight the architect of the church reestablished the just proportions of the portico also on the west side, whilst likewise using a more ancient wall running in a different direction.

As regards the portico itself we must conclude that it was formed from strong pilasters at the corners and that they had to support large beams which in turn supported the entire framework of smaller beams which carried the tiles.

THE SACRISTIES AND DEPENDENCIES TO THE NORTH-EAST AND SOUTHEAST OF THE CHURCH

With the second campaign the loci of the dependencies of the Byzantine church in the zone to the east of the limits of the portico, both on the north and on the south came to light. In the same campaign we deepened the excavations on the south side of the baptistery in order to study completely the stratigraphy of this sector.

Excavation of the zone of the southern sacristy, no. 10, plan I. We had already begun the excavation of this area in the first campaign, but the clearance had not gone down far; in fact we stopped at the level of the lime floor which occupies a large part of the southeast corner and only between this and the wall of the octagon the excavation went down about 80 cm.

The sacristy is constructed between the southeast wall of the church, the baptistry on the north, the wall of the sacred precinct of the Jewish Christians on the east and one of its own walls on the south. In depth the excavation extended between the lime pavement of the southeast corner and the block of the baptistry on the north, so that the eastern wall of the church and that of the sacred precinct were completely exposed and we were able to determine the stratigraphy on the north and the south. Beginning with the top of the wall of the sacred precinct we descended 2,58 m. in depth, namely, down to the native soil. From this sounding we have the following facts: —

1. The most ancient wall in this sector is that of the sacred Jewish Christian precinct whose foundations rest on the native soil.

2. In the zone immediately east of the venerated room

there was no habitation before the construction of the sacred precinct, but only a kind of irregular free space which was organized by the Jewish Christians in the late Roman period.

3. Against the wall of the Jewish Christians, at a depth of 2.17 m., there is a lime pavement contemporaneous with the sacred precinct, on which the foundation of the Byzantine octagon rests.

4. When the Byzantine church was constructed the Jewish Christian pavement was buried under a homogeneous filling of earth to support the pavement of the corridor between the two sacristies (at about 87 cm.).

5. Finally also this pavement was buried by the block of masonry of the baptistery.

The two sacristies of the church. The eastern end of the Byzantine church, on the eastern side, used the wall of the sacred precinct to develop its dependencies. Before the baptistery with its adjoining apse was made two sacristies were gained on this side by the construction of two walls which joined the northeast and southeast corners of the octagon and the wall of the sacred precinct. These were united with one another by a passage or corridor. Since the area of the church was surrounded by the wall of the sacred precinct on four sides it was easy to arrange also dependencies of the two sacristies. In this way a kind of large wing resulted which extended from north to south and joined the two ends of the portico.

The sacristies have a nearly triangular form on account of their contact with the walls of the octagon. The sacristies had lime pavements on a level lower than the pavements of the church, from which one ascended by two doorways (of which only one is still *in situ* today) situated on the southeast and northeast sides of the octagon. When the baptistery was built the two sacristies remained independent since the passage

between them was eliminated.

Dependencies of the sacristies were distributed on the north and south sides. On the north a locus measuring 5,45 x 4,45 m. (measures were taken between the walls of the foundation) was formed by the north and east sides of the sacred precinct, whilst the south and west walls are contemporaneous with the church. Since the loci were rather large for a stone roof, two pilasters were constructed against the walls of the east and west to lighten the load.

The dependency of the southern sacristy was also formed on two sides (east and south) by the sacred precinct and on the other two by walls contemporaneous with the church. Of the pavements we found only fragments of the dependency closest to the sacristy. This pavement of lime rests on a thick filling of earth. To control the subsoil we opened a trench in this filling and we went down 2,10 m. under the actual level of the wall of the sacred precinct. In this way we were able to follow the foundation of the Byzantine wall between the sacristy and the dependency. The foundation reaches a depth of 1,40 m. and does not rest on virgin soil but on a stratum of sand.

The second room of the dependency has the same characteristics as the preceding; also here a sounding in the subsoil has revealed the southern wall of the sacred precinct and the northern Byzantine wall.

Byzantine loci against the southern wall of the sacred precinct of the Jewish Christians. Outside of the two dependencies of the southern sacristy, on the southern side of the church, there was nothing else than the portico and a strip open to the sky limited by the sacred precinct of the Jewish Christians. In the Byzantine period (very probably when the church was built) a series of loci was built against the southern wall of the sacred precinct in such a way as to cover the entire

extent of the wall up to the entrance gate of the sacred precinct. This wing probably consisted of six rooms of oblong form. The physiognomy of these loci is not very clear, because we found there ruins and a lack of pavements and sills. We think that they could have been storerooms and habitations. The western part of these loci was reused in the late medieval period as an establishment of a press and an olive-mill (with the reuse of ancient equivalents).

II. THE HABITATIONS OF THE FIRST CENTURY

(To follow the analysis of this part use plan II.)

The Byzantine octagon church did not rise on some indifferant place, but on a network of more ancient structures; amongst these the first rank was held by a sacred place which in the preceding centuries had been venerated by the Christians since it had soon been transformend into a cult center. As happened regularly in antiquity when a new building was erected on the site of an old one, the latter was buried beneath the former; and there, where the levels of destruction of the preceeding building stopped, the levels of the foundation of the new construction began. The same happened in the case of the Byzantine church of Capharnaum; the edifice buried beneath its foundations and pavements a complex of small habitations which were very much older. As to the location of the church, however, special care was taken to make the central octagon coincide with the same area and to have the same dimensions as the sacred place venerated already before. Although the Byzantine church was erected on the same area as the ancient buried edifices it did not destroy them completely, but by putting its foundations on them, it simply buried them with their truncated walls, but with all the pavements as they were at the time when the new construction was begun.

This fact, of the greatest importance for us, has made it possible to retrace and bring to light among the buildings undoubtedly of the Byzantine church and its dependencies other older buildings with completely different characteristics. Various habitations of extreme poverty have been found; they, together with the archaeological finds, suggest a date in the first century of our era.



Fig. 11. Habitations (1-2) of the first century against the south side of the central octagon; 3-4 are foundations of the Byzantine church (photo by the author).

The walls are laid dry without any mortar; perhaps between the large stones which make up the wall there was a filling of earth (earth made into paste), but in the actual state, after the buildings had been buried for centuries, under a filling of earth, it is difficult to be certain on this point. The immediate impression which we received from the examination of these walls is that every form of paste is lacking between the stones. The walls are formed from large and at times from very large black basalt stones collected from the shore of the lake or from the surrounding fields. Even today the entire region of Capharnaum is covered with these basalt stones. These large stones were used in the walls as they were found; only for the sills and in the jambs of the doors one finds basalt stones which have been summarily dressed or worked. The poverty of the proprietors of these houses did not permit the least fashioning of these stones, gathered as providence had scattered them along the shores and in the fields. The interstices which necessarily were formed between the stones were closed, as is always the custom, with smaller stones.

Roofs. It is evident that walls of this kind, no matter how thick they might be, could never have been able to carry a masonry roof or a vault without causing the supporting lateral walls to collapse without fail owing to the weight. Although in the excavation we did not find elements of the roofs of these buildings, it is not difficult to imagine that the roofs of these habitations had been made from beams and branches of trees and covered with a mixture of earth and straw. The episode of the paralytic let down from the roof in front of the Lord in the house of Capharnaum makes one think precisely of a roof of this kind, which could have been undone at one point in a few minutes without causing damage to the many people assembled in the house (see MARK II, 4).

Sills. In the habitations found below the church three



Fig. 12. 4 habitations of the first century A.D.; 1-3 walls and pavements of an annex of the house church; 5 and 7 parts of the octagon church; 6 is a sill of a door of the sacristy (photo by the author).

sills turned up; others which surely were there have disappeared beneath the foundations of the walls of the Byzantine church. These sills are all of the same type: they are long blocks of basaltic stone cut to form the tread of the door or they have cavities at the two extremities and a notch in the center for the latch. The wooden door must probably have been folding. In front of the sill of room 15 in plan II there was found a ring with a nail which must have belonged to the door.

Pavements. Almost all the loci which we found had a floor made of black basalt stones; the stones do not rest on beds of lime but on earth. Also the rather deep interstices between the stones are filled up with earth in which were found clay sherds and some coins. These rough pavements which imitated the paving of the Roman roads served as a protection against the abundant humidity of the subsoil due to the infiltration of the water from the nearby lake. This is the reason why stone pavements of basalt were preferred to those of beaten earth and ashes which were found at times on lower levels and afterwards also on certain higher levels.

The paving with irregular, roundish stones of black basalt with deep interstices makes it possible to understand real well the context of the Gospel parable of the lost drachma (see LUKE XV, 8).

The general distribution of the loci. It is not always easy to recognize the original distribution of the loci which we found owing to the transformation of the loci in the venerated house in the complex of the house church and more so after the superimposition of the network of foundations of the rings of the Byzantine church. Here we will note some points that can be helpful in interpreting the general plans of these habitations.

Numbers 2 and 4 in plan II give the impression that the pavement which is faced by the sill of no. 14c, in plan II, is rather the pavement of a courtyard.

The venerated house no. 1, in plan II, with its larger area, faced this courtyard, whilst on the other three sides, on the south, on the west and partially on the north, it is surrounded by other rooms. It is not very clear today where the door is which gives access to the venerated room from the outside, owing to the presence of the Byzantine octagon and to some change in the house church of the last period. On that account if on the east and west we have two continuous walls of the venerated room, then on the north and south sides, if one observes attentively, he can make out remains of two doorways: on the south of the venerated room at no. 8, on the north, however, there would be the door to the outside at the courtyard.

Loci with a distinctive appearance in this first most important block are no. 15 in plan II, with the sill of its door; no. 16, plan II, which could have the sill of no. 14c as an entrance. It is to be noted that the wall to the east of 14c is not very certain. Also locus no. 6 is in communication with no. 14c and with no. 16.

A locus with peculiar characteristics is no. 17 with a fire-place; the steps against the north wall presuppose an entrance at a higher level and therefore on this account must be brought in relation with the construction of the sacred Jewish Christian precinct which produced a rise of the levels in the entire western zone in respect to the ancient pavement of the first Roman period.

In the second campaign we became better acquainted with the loci 18, 19 and 21a, which are habitations of the first century. In fact the east and south walls of 18 were found; also the plan of no. 7 is now complete and of no. 19 new elements were found more to the south beyond the foundation of the portico. Also of no. 21a new elements were found in the southern zone.

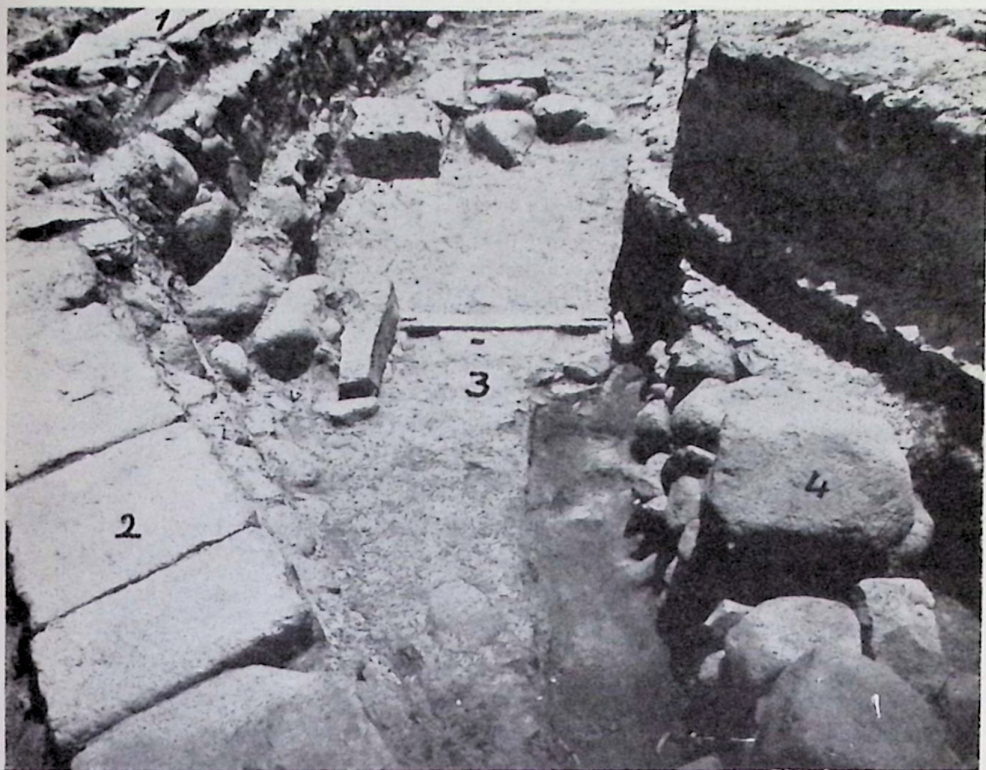


Fig. 13. Threshold (3) of a house of the first century with its wall (4) in the area of the portico of the basilica; 1-2 are the thresholds of the portico on the north and northwest sides (photo of the author).

No. 14b, in plan II, in the actual state of the excavation, has few elements, since on the north it was cut by the wall of the sacred precinct. Whenever the excavation is continued in the zone between the sacred precinct and the synagogue, it will be possible to find new elements.

DESCRIPTION OF THE HABITATIONS OF THE FIRST CENTURY

We will give a description of the habitations of the first century following the numbers in plan II.

The venerated hall no. 1. (THE HOUSE OF ST. PETER). This place of 7,00 x 6,50 m. was buried beneath the foundations of the central octagon of the Byzantine church. Of the original parts of the room we have on the east a wall still existing under the foundation of the east side of the octagon; almost its entire width (of about 70 cm.) is visible. One can follow this wall for a distance of 3,60 m.; it rises above the floor of the house church for 40 cm. It was built with black basalt stones with mortar.

The other original parts still remaining of this venerated room exist on the west, and in the northwest and southwest corners. On the west there is preserved the whole wall which divides this venerated room from the other bordering rooms nos. 6 and 7. The whole west face of this wall — the only part which projects from the foundations of the octagon — is preserved real well for a variable height of 60-80 cm. As the other wall on the east it is constructed with large basalt stones laid dry. This wall, in the internal corners, meets two other segments of wall on the south and north sides constructed with the same characteristics. On the interior these two corners of the venerated hall no. 1 were plastered and decorated with pictures. These decorations on the two corners of the venerated hall, as also the pavement in lime, stones and fragments of pottery are elements of the final transformation wrought by the Jewish Christians in the late Roman period. In the excavation of the venerated hall we found thousands of fragments of this decoration with numerous graffiti in Greek, Syriac and Hebrew.



Fig. 14. Remains of a habitation of the Roman period with a fireplace (1) in the foreground, in the area of the portico to the west; 2 is a deposit of ashes; 3 is a stairway (photo of the author).

The pavement of lime of the house church of the late Roman period covers many older pavements of the venerated hall. In the soundings made at the end of the second campaign we were able to examine the succession of these numerous pavements which in the northeast sector reach as many as eleven levels. Among these (a good number of which belong already to the first century) there are four successive levels in white lime that stand out. Between these pavements we collected fragments of Herodian lamps. Owing to these soundings below the pavement of the house church of the Jewish Christians the chronology of the origin of the veneration of the house of St. Peter, with the consequent creation of a place of cult or a primitive house church, must definitely be fixed already in the first century A.D.

Room no. 9. On the south side of the venerated hall there are two loci of the same period with pavements of basalt stones and with walls laid dry of the same technic and material noted for the venerated hall no. 1. To the east room no. 9 borders on the southern door (100 cm.) opening onto the atrium of the house church of the late Roman period.

The western side of the venerated hall no. 1 borders on two oblong loci; no. 7 on the southwest side measures about 2.50 m. by 6.50.

In the northeast corner of this room we made a sounding to control not only the levels of the pavements of no. 7, but above all to follow the development of the foundation of the western wall of the venerated hall. From the soundings made both in no. 8 and in no. 7 it became clear that the solid pavement is very old, probably already from the second century. Under this there is another solid pavement in basalt stones (above which there was found pottery of the first century) between which there is interposed a thin layer of beaten earth with traces of ashes (no. 7). The western wall



Fig. 14a. The house of Peter. Soundings beneath the the pavement of the house church. The remains of lime floors of the first century are visible. They bear witness to the veneration for this house already in that period. (Photo by Father V. Corbo).

of the venerated hall extends beneath the level of the solid mass of room 7 for about 90 cm. until it reaches a compressed level of sand.

Room 6 bordering on this one on the north is 2.40 m. wide, but its length is not exactly known because we did not find the north wall. The west wall is likewise preserved against the foundation of the Byzantine wall; so also the south wall which divides the two rooms. On the west wall, near the southwestern corner there is a recess, which, perhaps, served for putting small jars.

Also in this room the walls and pavements are of the same type as those encountered above.

Room no. 5.— In the actual state, which reflects the last stage of the transformation of the house church, room no. 5 is located on the north side of the venerated hall and measures 2.30 m. x 3.20. From the soundings made in the whole area of the room and partly in no. 4 we have been able to determine better the original character of the room.

From the sounding in no. 4 it appeared that the east wall of no. 5 rests on the higher stone pavement and hence does not belong to old habitations of the first century, but rather delimits on the west the annex of the house church of the late Roman period (see no. 6 in plan III). Therefore in the original disposition of the edifices of the first century this locus no. 5 was nothing else than a part of the courtyard on the north side of the venerated hall. In fact in the soundings made in 5 it became evident that the courtyard had been paved with stones several times, but that the highest pavement can be dated about the second century A. D. In no. 4 we found part of a higher pavement, under which there was a coin of Numerianus (283-284). The door to the venerated hall opened on this courtyard.

Habitation no. 14c. The complete situation of the habitation no. 14c, near room no. 5, is not very clear; it has preserved the sill of the entry, cut into a basalt block, which the builder of the church put there with a certain amount of care. The width of the entrance is about 110 cm. I said that the complete



Fig. 15. A detail of the southwestern corner of the house of St. Peter with the decoration and the pavement of the Jewish Christians (photo of the author).

situation of the habitation is not entirely clear because in the locus on the north side of the portico there are traces of a wall 14c of which one does not know well if it is in relation with this habitation, since these remains are placed at a short distance from the entrance to the habitation no.15.

Also in this habitation the walls and the pavement are of the type met with above. It is very probable that the room is of the late Roman period.

Courtyards nos. 4 and 2. In finishing the circuit around the venerated place we encounter on the north and east two paved zones which are not delimited by any walls of the first century. We think that this paving with basalt stones executed in the customary technic of the pavements met with in the habitations already reviewed, belonged to a courtyard in front of the venerated house of St. Peter. This courtyard was later included in the final transformation of the house church and covered with a layer of white lime, stones and fragments of pottery. On the east side the wall has a door towards no. 2, plan II: of this the sill and the north jamb are well preserved.

Habitation no. 15. The remains of this habitation and of the following numbers are at a somewhat greater distance from the venerated room, but all the rooms are attached to each other. This habitation was cut from the northwest foundation of the portico of the church. One enters habitation no. 15 by a threshold which is 110 cm. wide; it is the usual type of sill of a block of black basalt with the necessary incisions for the insertion of the jambs of the door, which opened towards the interior. Of the walls of the house the one to the south is well preserved and those to the east, west and north in part. Near the sill there is the beginning of a pavement of basalt stones, which, however, does not continue but is transformed into a floor of packed earth and ashes.

Room no. 16. To the south of habitation no. 15 there has been found a part of a room with a fine fireplace, which was probably part of the habitation no. 14c. Under a pavement of beaten earth the pavement of basalt stones has been found as in the other habitations; on the level of this pavement there is the opening of a fire-place near the southern wall. The fire-



Fig. 16. A detail of the northwestern corner of the house of St. Peter (photo of the author).

place is round and has a diameter of 71-72 cm.; in the better preserved part the wall reaches a height of 30 cm. Whilst the bottom is made of basalt stones the walls are covered with fire-proof earth of varied thickness of 2 to 3 cm. The walls are of the usual type.

Room no. 17. Room 17 is delimited by the walls of the foundation of the octagon and of the portico (in part by the sacred Jewish Christian precinct); it measured 2.50 m. x about 5.00 m. When the levels of the habitations of the west wing were raised higher, the level of the pavement of this locus was not raised, but instead a small stairway was made in the northwest corner. The pavement is of the usual black basalt stone; on the south side, near the wall, a round fire-place (diameter 63 cm.) was found. Also this fire-place has a bottom and sides of basalt stones, but the sides have been covered with a layer of fire-proof earth between 1 and 3 cm. thick. The better preserved part of the wall is about 30 cm. high. Near the fire-place, to the northeast, there was a deposit of ashes.

Room no. 18. Like the preceding, it is situated between the walls of the foundation of the octagon and of the portico. It measures 5.60 x about 2.00 (2.50) m. Against the remains of the foundation of the western wall there was a round fire-place which was quite ruined. The pavement of the usual type of basalt stones is well preserved. In clearing this pavement we found a quantity of Roman pottery with six fragments of Herodian lamps. At the southeast of this pavement there were found, on a higher level, remnants of another pavement.

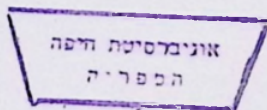
Remains of habitations on the south side. In the second campaign we finished our investigation of the conglomeration of habitations also on the south and west sides. On the south side after we had removed the filling and some walls that were out of place, built in recent years, we found, in the area comprised between the foundations of the south wall of the portico and the wall of the sacred precinct, the remains of at least three other habitations, of which two (towards the east) are certainly of the first century as is indicated both by the pottery and by some coins which were found. Also towards

the west there are remains of habitations, but until now we have not made any sounding under the pavement of unworked basalt stones to determine the nature of these remains.

Habitations on the west side. During the second campaign the wide strip of land on the west side of the portico of the church was explored. In this new excavation the two western walls of the sacred precinct of the Jewish Christians were found and between these two walls some other habitations of the first century.

Now it seems clear that this "insula" of poor houses extended further to the west and that a part of these houses was left outside the sacred precinct of the Jewish Christians, who placed the foundations of their sacred precinct on much older walls and pavements. The houses preserved their old appearance in this final period of the Jewish Christians, but they had their floor level raised. At times new loci were built on the more ancient ones. Here we will indicate only the more ancient habitations (those of the first Roman period) in order to complete the report on the houses around the venerated hall.

In the western strip there are four or five habitations or remains of habitations of the first century. Of these habitations we have excavated and studied in a special way the one that is situated at the extreme south (it measures 3,00 [3,45] x 4,30 m.). Here not only the walls but also the pavements have been preserved. By an accurate study of all the levels we have been able to establish the occupation of the place from the first century (Herodian pottery and coins of Agrippa and the procurators and of the first Jewish revolt) to the fourth century. Towards this last period the levels of the pavements were raised; in fact in the northern wall we found the sill at about 80 cm. above the pavement of the first century. Also of other habitations we have walls and



pavements which always have the characteristics observed in other rooms.

In the northwestern corner against the walls of the sacred precinct we have found at a higher level two loci for which the coins and the pottery suggest a date towards the fourth century. But also in the subsoil of these two rooms the alignment of a wall continues which formed part of a more ancient habitation.

III. THE HOUSE CHURCH OF THE JEWISH CHRISTIANS IN THE HOUSE OF ST. PETER

(*For the analysis of this part see plan III.*)

The archaeological excavation beneath the pavements of the Byzantine church has not only brought to light a network of habitations of the first century of our era, but has demonstrated with the same evidence also the evolution of a cultic character which made itself known in these habitations around the largest room of the complex. The sacred character of this hall is known from ancient Christian tradition, which has reached us through the testimony of pilgrims; ¹⁶ today we know this independently of the testimonies, also from the testimonies of the archaeological excavations, which we will present in a complete manner to scholars in the final publication of these researches. In this preliminary report we are limiting ourselves to an analysis of the masonry work which exists around and in this venerated hall, which is indicated as the house of St. Peter at Capharnaum.

With the transformation of the house of Peter into a sanctuary and into a place of cult we have at Capharnaum one of the most ancient house churches (perhaps the most

¹⁶ There are two passages. One of PETER THE DEACON who reports a more ancient text ascribed to EGERIA. "In Capharnaum, however, a church has been made out of the house of the prince of the Apostles; its walls are standing until today as they were. There the Lord cured the paralytic." (BALDI, O.F.M., *Enchiridion Locorum Sanctorum*, Jerusalem, 1955, p. 299, no. 443.) The second of the ANONYMOUS OF PIACENZA (570): "We likewise came into Capharnaum into the house of blessed Peter, which is now a basilica." (BALDI, *op. cit.*, p. 293, no. 436).

ancient) which is known. And precisely since it has a special character, it eludes the classification invented from a mass of theories for this primitive kind of Christian sacred places.¹⁷

The principal and largest room of a very poor habitation (no. 1 in plan III) was venerated by the Jewish Christians of the first generation and in the following centuries by adapting some dependencies into a place of reunion and of prayer in order to preserve in this place the sacred character which it derived both from the person of the proprietor Peter and also from the consecration given to it by the long stay of the Lord. So whilst around this hall the cult of the primitive Jewish Christians of the community of Capharnaum was centered, the other surrounding rooms continued to throb with the ordinary life of men. The house of Peter, in the following centuries, continued to be indeed the house of the Lord and the house of men.

The archaeological excavation has found the witnesses of the continuity of the sacred cult in the venerated hall since the first century. The cult of this hall continued until the inhabitants of this sacred precinct were removed by the construction of the octagonal Byzantine church and from then on the direct cult of the hall ceased and its memory passed on to the church itself. The sacred hall differed from all the loci around it in this that it is the only one which has signs of veneration from the first century onwards. In fact it is different from all the living quarters (see the description and analysis in chap. II), which likewise have the same characteristics — preserved for centuries — only hall no. 1, although constructed like all the others as a habitation, and, even more,

¹⁷ For some general information regarding the problem of the house church one may consult P. TESTINI, *Archeologia Cristiana*, Roma, 1958, pp. 547-558.

constructed with the same poor material, is enriched at a certain time with many coats of delicate plaster to serve as pavements and later also for pictures on the walls and is enlarged into the vast house church with subsidiary loci, courtyards and a sacred precinct, and the piety of the faithful has left undoubted traces of their veneration in many invocations incised on decorated walls.

THE GENERAL ASPECT OF THE HOUSE CHURCH IN THE FINAL PHASE OF ITS EVOLUTION

After the second campaign information regarding the house church was augmented by new elements and its evolution in general became quite clear. That well constructed wall which we noted both on the east and on the north of the church has been studied more thoroughly and it has been established that its course continues without interruption also on the south and west sides, so that it forms an almost perfect quadrilateral of 27 meters to a side, which is less than on the eastern side where the wall reaches 30 meters. Thus we were able to establish the existence of a real sacred precinct which encloses in its center the venerated hall with all the dependent edifices.

The sacred precinct had its entrance on the south towards the shore of the lake. On the west side a second wall extended from the southern wall for about 16 m. towards the north and formed a kind of corridor of protection, which opened on the north towards an area free of buildings. Other free zones were on the east and on the south. The venerated hall always remained in the center; which in this period (which we are led to fix in the fourth century A. D. by the totality of the finds, coins and pottery) together with all the habitations of the first century and with the newly constructed

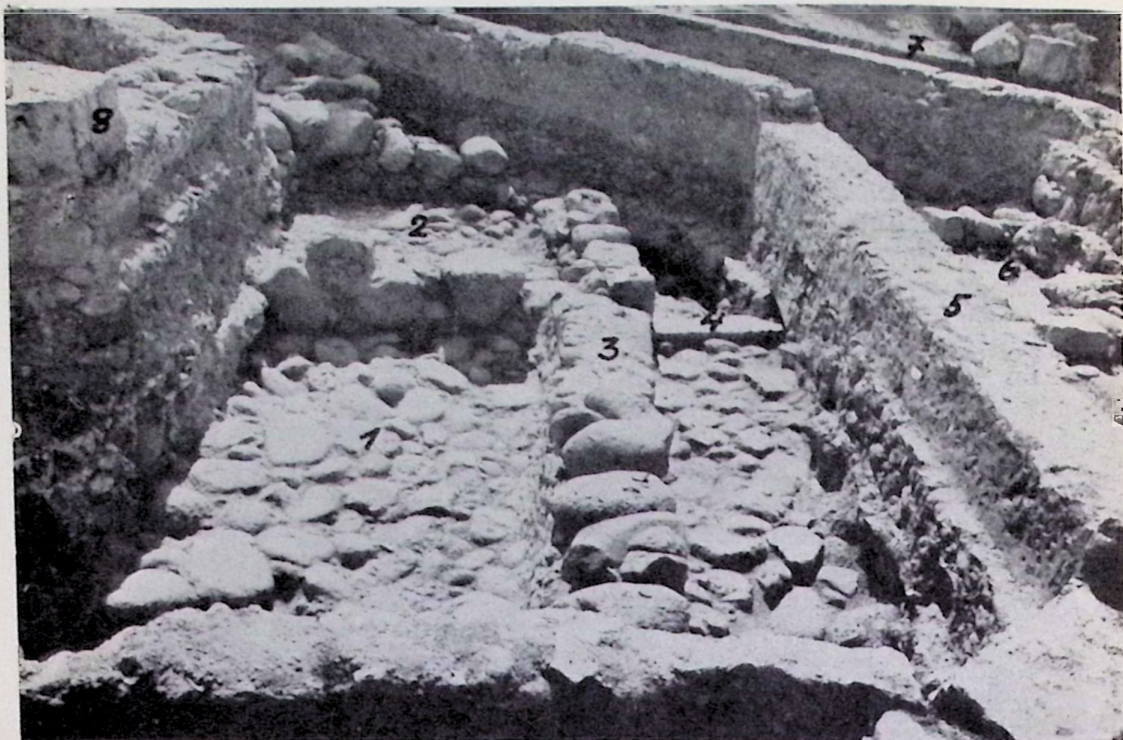


Fig. 17. Remains of the annex 4 of the house church . 1-2 pavements of the first century; 3 is the north wall of the annex; 4 is a threshold of a habitation of the first century; 5, 7-8 are foundations of the church (photo of the author).

dependencies combined to form a larger house church.

Already several times we had occasion to note how in this last period of evolution the venerated hall was restored with a new pavement of lime. Moreover the walls of the first

century were covered with variously colored layers of plaster; and the roof itself must have been renewed since two pilasters were erected against the north and south walls to support a stone arch which would receive the pressure of the weight of the new roofs.

On the eastern side of the venerated hall an atrium was newly constructed (about 9,73 x 2,50 m.) with a pavement of lime and a dependency was built on the old courtyard to the north of the venerated hall. This dependency communicated with the atrium and probably (on this side the original walls are hidden by the Byzantine foundations) also with the venerated hall. Also the atrium must have had a door on the north side as it has one on the south side; that on the north probably disappeared in the demolition of the wall in an undetermined period. From the atrium one could reach the entire eastern zone under the open sky between the house church and the sacred precinct, where we have found remains of paving in lime. From the atrium or from the eastern zone under the open sky one could reach a second uncovered zone to the north; this likewise has a pavement in lime.

The house church developed itself by beginning with hall 1, which was transformed into a place of cult and of meeting properly speaking, leaving intact the entire structure and adding reënforcements (pilasters and arches) to support the roof which on this occasion was almost certainly changed. The new rooms were added in the area of the courtyard; no. 4 on the northeast, no. 2 to the east with new well cemented walls. Probably to the dependencies of the house church we must add the remains of the pavements nos. 14 and 14a on the north.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF THE ROOMS OF THE HOUSE CHURCH

The house church besides the sacred precinct comprised the hall of reunion no. 1 and some dependencies on the north and east sides. On the north side the courtyard was restricted by the new room no. 4 whose northern wall was joined to the jamb of the door of the ancient habitation no. 14c in plan II. Besides this new wall there was the one on the east which terminated against the northeast corner of the venerated room no. 1. The other walls on the south and the west were identical with those of the preexisting rooms. Also on the eastern side of the venerated room an atrium was formed by entirely new walls on the north, east and south sides. Like the venerated room these two new loci also had pavements of lime and stones placed on the more ancient pavement of undressed basalt stones. The new walls of the house church have a good technic and are made of cemented basalt blocks with the best mortar of white lime.

The structure of the wall of the sacred precinct. The sacred precinct is formed by four walls plus a fifth which runs inside almost parallel to that on the west (it measures 5.40 — 5.80 m.) in such a way as to form a courtyard giving access via the west side.

The structure of the masonry is homogeneous in all the walls of the sacred precinct. The best information was obtained from the eastern and southern walls which we excavated on both faces, whilst the other two we excavated completely only on the inner face. The walls were erected on rather wide foundations, from which dressed masonry (at various heights) begins immediately; in this first stage it preserves a width of about 80 cm. In the upper part the wall is in general 60 cm. wide. The masonry consists of irregular black basalt blocks cemented



Fig. 18. The pavement of the annex 2 of the house church, seen from the north (photo of the author).

with very good mortar and the walls were always plastered with roughcast and in some places have a first coat of plaster. The north side is the one which is most developed in height.

The walls of the atrium. Beginning with the eastern wall 11 of the foundation of the octagon at a distance of 78 cm. one comes upon the wall of the atrium which is preserved to

the height of 70 cm. above the lime floor. This wall, which was completely brought to light only in the second campaign, measures 9,73 m. in length. It is 60 cm. wide and is constructed from black basalt blocks, mostly irregular and round, cemented with the best mortar of white lime, and with minute pebbles as in the masonry of the sacred precinct. In the present state it does not have plaster, but only roughcast to make the walls regular; however at the north end the wall has traces of plaster. In the second campaign, after we had completely demolished no. 14a, plan I, we found at the bottom the whole foundation of a wall which closed the atrium on the north. Bound up with the walls there is a pavement in white lime with stones and sherds. Beneath the pavement there appeared a solid mass of rough basalt stones. On the south side there is a door which from the atrium communicates with the zone found on the south. Beyond the door there are two steps. The pavement of the atrium in its actual state measures 2,50 by 7,00 m. in length since it was broken by a later intrusion; the original length was 9,73 m.

Dependency no. 4. The dependency no. 4 having been created in the area of the courtyard adjoining the venerated hall, used the north wall of no. 1 whilst the other walls were constructed anew. The wall on the east is made of irregular cemented blocks with good mortar of white lime and sand; it is 50-52 cm. wide; its height varies from 20 to 70 cm. as it extends from south to north. This side is 3,20 m. long and finishes against the northeastern angle of the venerated wall (which is hidden at this point by the foundation of the Byzantine octagon). From the courtyard one entered the dependency no. 4 of the house church by means of a door existing in the eastern wall of the aforesaid dependency.

The north wall is of the same technic as the preceding: it runs in an east-west direction until it meets the wall and sill!

of the habitation no. 14c in plan II. Its length is 4.20 m. and its width 52-60 cm.; it is preserved to a height of about 60 cm. This wall is founded on the pavement of the courtyard of basalt stones.

In the northeast corner there were found traces of a pavement of white lime of the same type as that of the atrium; but today it has disappeared almost completely, exposing to view the ancient stone floor of the courtyard.

Locus 4 measured about 4.20 x 2.50 m.

TRANSFORMATION OF THE HALL NO. 1 INTO THE HOUSE CHURCH

In the enlargement of the house church the principal attention was given to hall no. 1, evidently on account of its sacred memories. We have observed in the analysis made in chap. II what original elements still remain of the house, both after its transformation into a house church and after the work of founding the Byzantine church. Now we limit ourselves to a detailed consideration of those elements which are peculiar to the house church.

The pavement (5.80 m. east to west; 6.45 m. north to south). Above we noted that after the soundings made under the pavement in lime we found numerous older pavements. Here we will pause for a moment to examine the pavement in lime. This floor covers the old one everywhere and we found it intact also in the western corners, where it was easy to ascertain that the floor was made first and then the coats of plaster on the walls; whereas in the ancient edifices — especially when there is question of mosaic pavements — the coats of plaster were put on first beginning at a level which is lower than that of the pavement. See, for example, the coats of plaster

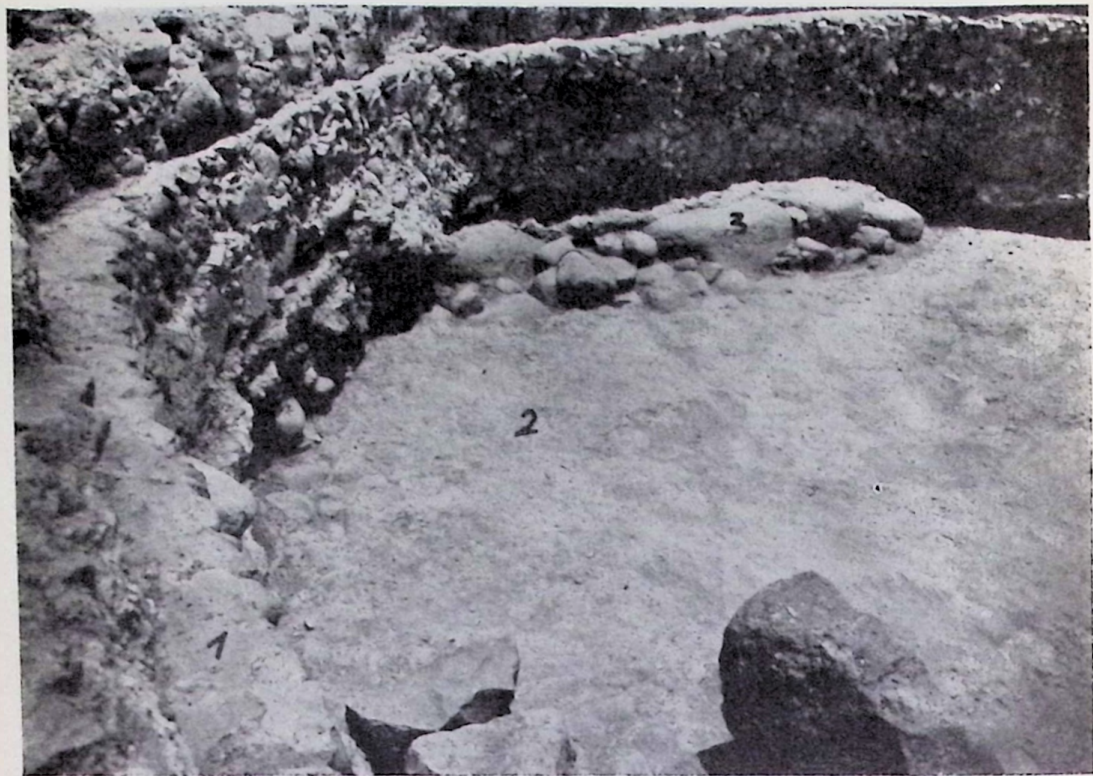


Fig. 19. A partial view of the house of St. Peter in the center of the octagon 1; the pavement in lime (2) of the Jewish Christians; the original wall (3) of the house on the east (photo of the author).

of the Herodium of Jebel Fureidis.¹⁸

The level of the pavement is not uniform; in general it tends to rise towards the corners (in the two western corners and against the corners of the pilaster of the north wall; this tendency is to be noted also in the entire northwestern zone). There is, however, a declivity towards the south. In the middle of the floor, in the zone of the two pilasters, there is a depression of the size of the pilaster; the depression is caused by the fall of the voussoirs of the arch which had been erected to support the new roof. In excavating the whitish layer which had been formed on the pavement we found broken pieces of plaster mixed with fallen masonry; in contact with the pavement, however, we found large quantities of plaster in rather large fragments; these were the first to fall when the house church was destroyed to make room for the Byzantine church. The richest zone, in which these finds of large pieces of plaster on the pavement were made, was the south side, especially near the pilaster.

The pilasters and the arch. When we treated of the roof of room no. 1 in chap. II, we suggested a roof made of beams and a layer of earth and straw. When the larger house was erected around the venerated hall, the roof of the hall was also changed. Of this change the two masonry pillars found against the northern and southern walls bear witness. These two piers — as one could conclude from the recovery of two voussoirs still covered with plaster and paintings — supported an arch, which crossed the very center of the room and was destined to support the weight of the roof. We do not know exactly the character of this roof, at least if we do not wish to bring in relation with this roof the very abundant plaster,

¹⁸ See V. CORBO, O. F. M., *L'Herodion di Gebel Fureidis* in *Liber Annuus* XII, p.241.

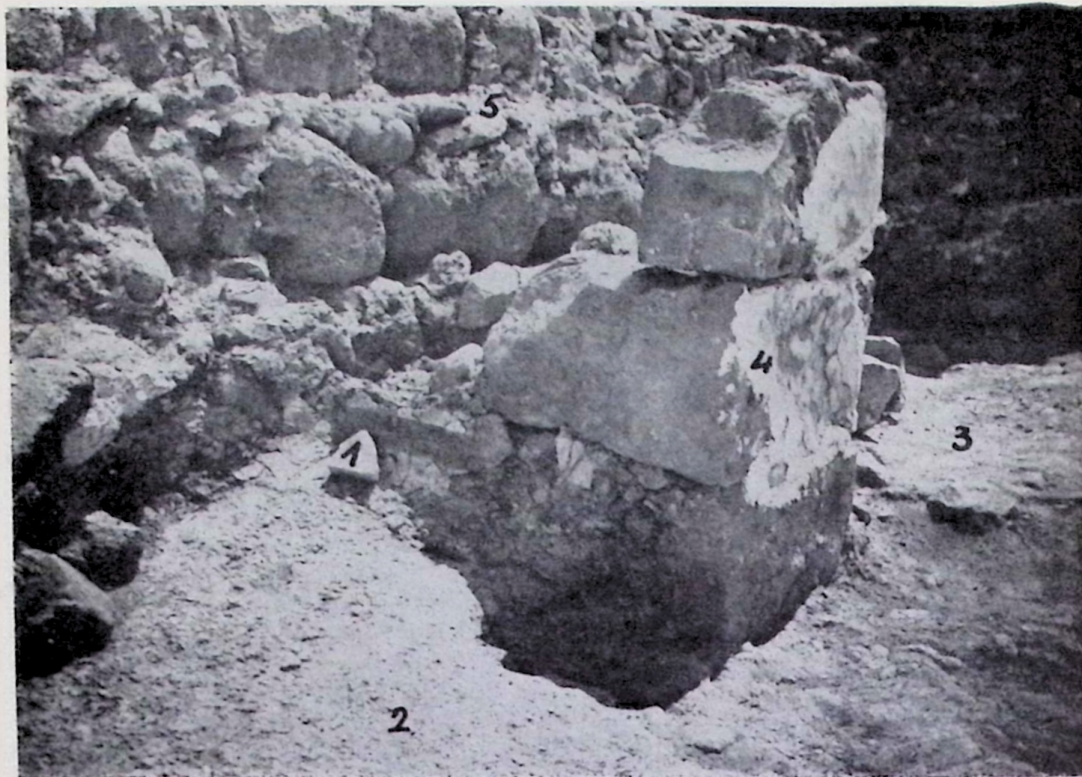


Fig. 20. Detail of the northern pier (4) in the house church; remains of the decoration (1); lime pavement (2-3); foundation of the octagon (5) (photo of the author).

which was rather thick (7-8 cm.) with a very smooth surface, made of the best mortar of white plaster and of basalt sand, which we found in the entire second level of the filling of the central octagon, but especially in large fragments near the pier against the south wall.

As to the piers we note that the one on the north is completely visible with the two angles of attachment to the north wall of the house church. The pier has preserved three courses which measure 27.30 and 34 cm. beginning from the pavement; it is constructed with black basalt blocks which are slightly worked, but three faces were covered with white plaster decorated with colors. On the corners, at the time of the discovery, one could distinctly see a band of red color which delimited a fancifully decorated field. This same decoration we found also on the two voussoirs of the arch.

The two corners at which the northern pier meets with the wall are rounded with white plaster which has a horizontal band of red color, as we find also in the decoration of the western corners. The plaster is very smooth and the decorative band is blood red (it ends at the height of about the first course) and is 65 mm. wide. The two sides of the plaster have a depth of 83 cm.; the face, however, is 52 cm. wide.

The pier of the south was found in a worse condition; it consists of two courses of basalt stone, like the other (the height of the courses is 30 cm.). The depth of the two sides of the pier is not well known; at present they project only 60 cm. from the masonry of the foundation of the octagon.

We do not know the point at which the arch springs from the two pilasters, but we may assume that it was not very high and so the roof could have been at a height of between four and five meters.

The walls. We have already noted and here we repeat for greater clearness, that we could not follow the original walls on all sides of the house as on the west and the east sides; on the other sides the foundation of the octagon has buried the old structure. But by making a careful examination near the northern pier we were able to note that the lower part of the reënforcing wall still exists; it was made at the

time of the transformation of the house church. This wall one can follow for about 2,20 m.; its height is 45 cm. The wall is made of stones and mortar of white plaster.

The plaster and decoration of the western corners. The thousands of fragments of plaster with decorations found in the central octagon, very many of which had graffiti, raised the question of the exact place from which they came, since many pieces had been found also in excavating the concentric ring, both on the north and on the south; a fine group was likewise found in the locus 2 in plan III and they were not missing either in the excavation of the zone of the portico on the north side. These problems were nicely solved when on the 29th of April we found the southwestern corner and on the 9th of May the northwestern corner of the venerated hall no. 1. Here we ascertained that all the plaster (also that found outside of room no. 1) came from this locus, the only one which produced remains of plaster with the same decorations.

The two western corners had been constructed with the usual basalt stones without mortar and raised as good as possible as all the rest of the wall of the entire complex of habitations which we have examined. No one would have thought that it was possible to plaster and decorate these extremely poor walls. At a certain time this one room, transformed into a place of cult, had its old walls transformed on the interior by a coat of plaster and by painting. Since the plaster and the painting, found in the excavation of the octagon are identical with that found in the corners of the original walls of the venerated room, we must affirm that they had been made at the same time, and come from the same walls.

In fact the western corners have the same white smooth plaster; these were made with mortar of white lime and sand and seem to consist of three coats. The plaster reaches to the pavement of lime to unite with it. Before the plaster could

be applied the plasterer had to stop up all the interstices of the surface of the walls and bring them into a fixed line; this operation was carried out with a paste of gray earth which at certain points has a considerable thickness. To this paste the plaster of white lime was applied and then it was decorated.



Fig. 21. A Greek graffito with an invocation to the Lord Jesus Christ (photo of the author).

The decoration still preserved *in situ* (the height of the part preserved on the walls is approximately 50 cm.) is that of the base. On a white background, at a short distance above the floor, a blood red band was drawn; this extended around the entire room no. 1, because we have found the same near the pier of the north wall. The painter had dipped his brush into too much paint, since many red drops ran down below the band onto the white field. Above the red band there is again the white field; but from here onwards the plaster has been destroyed and we know it only in fragments. These fragments which we have found in the excavation yield many colors of the decoration: red and dark orange in general abound; but vegetable green, sky blue, ocher and black are not wanting. As to motifs there are various: besides those in the form of bands, we have cruciform flowers, fruits such as the pome-

granates; there are imitations of cut trunks; or geometrical motifs, such as squares of various colors in checkerboard arrangement, or rhombs, or alternating inverted triangles of divers colors etc.



Fig. 22. To the left a graffito with the name of Peter. To the right a graffito of a bark (photo of the author).

Graffiti. Among the very numerous graffiti, almost all of which come from the venerated hall no. 1, there are 124 fragments in Greek, 18 in Syriac and 15 in Hebrew. All these graffiti are being examined and studied; Father Testa is busy-ing himself with them and preparing the publication. To make our picture more complete we will give a few examples of the Greek graffiti. On some fragments there are expressions which were certainly parts of prayers, such as the words ἐλέησον (have mercy) and ἀμήν, Amen. On another fragment there are the names of ΠΕΤΡΟ(Y), Peter and ΒΙΡΙΝΙΚ(H), Birinice. Another fragment has an invocation addressed to

Christ, the Lord: Κ(ύριε) Ἰ(ησοῦ) Χ(ριστ)ε βοήθη... Lord, Jesus Christ, help... As regards the themes of the Jewish Christians, there are among the graffiti certain symbols, dear to that community, as the bark, the cross of the winds and the gemmed cross.¹⁹

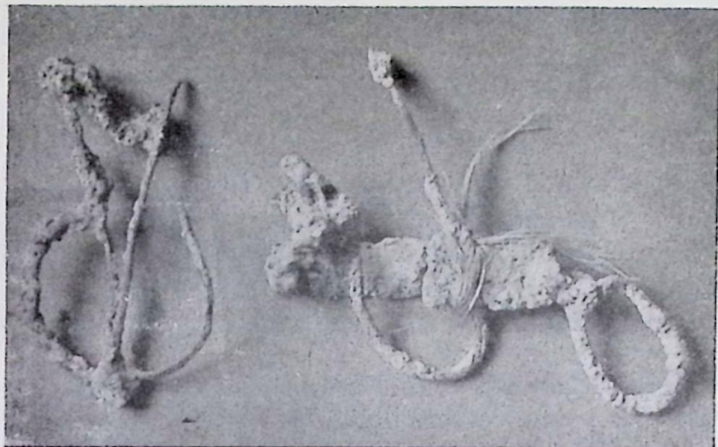


Fig. 23. Fish hooks found on the floor of the house church (photo of Father BAGATTI).

Coins and pottery. During the excavations we collected many coins which came from every level. Coins of the first to the fifth century are represented; the coins of the fourth

¹⁹ For the symbolism of the Jewish Christians see E. TESTA, O. F. M., *Il Simbolismo dei giudeo-cristiani*. Jerusalem, 1962; for the cross of the winds, p. 304; the bark, pp. 267-269. See also B. BAGATTI, O.F.M., *L'Eglise de la Circoncision*, Jerusalem, 1965, chapters VII-IX. On p. 86 there are texts relating to the Jewish Christians of Capharnaum.

century seem to be the more numerous and these were found in the filling between the high pavements of the habitations and the level of the mosaics of the Byzantine church. Of the coins of the sixth century we found only one in the fissure of a mosaic and for this reason it could represent an intrusion. In the lowest levels we have coins of the first century and between the fissures of the rough stones of the higher pavements of the habitations we found also coins of the second and third centuries.

The pottery reflects types with the same time limit as the coins, namely, of the first to the fifth century, but rare Hellenistic pieces are not wanting. On the pavements of the habitations in general there was collected pottery of practical utility in ordinary day to day life, such as fragments of cooking pots, pans, amphorae and lamps. The sigillata ware of the early Roman period is rare, whilst that of the late Roman period is well represented.

Among the objects found on the floor of the house church I mention two fishhooks and behind the east wall of the central octagon a small axe for cutting stones.²⁰

²⁰ An axe of the same type was found in 1931 in a tomb of the end of the fourth century at Tarshiha near Acri. See *QDAP* III, pl. VIII, no. 14.— Here I wish to thank the confreres who assisted me in the excavations: Fathers B. Bagatti, E. Testa, S. Loffreda of the Studium Biblicum at the Flagellation, and Father Godfrey Kloetzli of the convent at Capharnaum. — In the second campaign of excavations I had the assistance of Father Loffreda who occupied himself in a special way with the pottery which he will publish.

CONCLUSION

Having reached the end of this report we consider it useful to sum up in a few points the principal discoveries which we made in these first two campaigns of excavation in the area of the Christian church at Capharnaum, constructed over the house of St. Peter.

1) A complex of habitations of the first century of our era has been found in the entire area of the excavation.

2) In this complex of very poor habitations one hall was venerated in a special way from the first century onwards by the local community of Jewish Christians, who transformed this area into a place of cult, whilst they continued to live in the other rooms next to this one.

3) From the late Roman period (about the fourth century) onwards the community of Jewish Christians of Capharnaum enlarged the primitive house church by adding to the venerated hall an atrium on the east and dependencies on the north and by enclosing the entire small "*insula*" of the house of Peter within a sacred precinct.

4) The belief of the community of Jewish Christians of Capharnaum and of pilgrims in the sanctity of the place, indicated as the house of St. Peter by tradition, finds expression in incisions of symbols and graffiti on the walls of this venerated hall.

5) A church with a central plan (two concentric octagons with a portico on five sides and sacristies and subordinate loci on three other sides) was constructed at Capharnaum towards the middle of the fifth century over the venerated house of St. Peter.

FATHER VIRGILIO CORBO, O.F.M.

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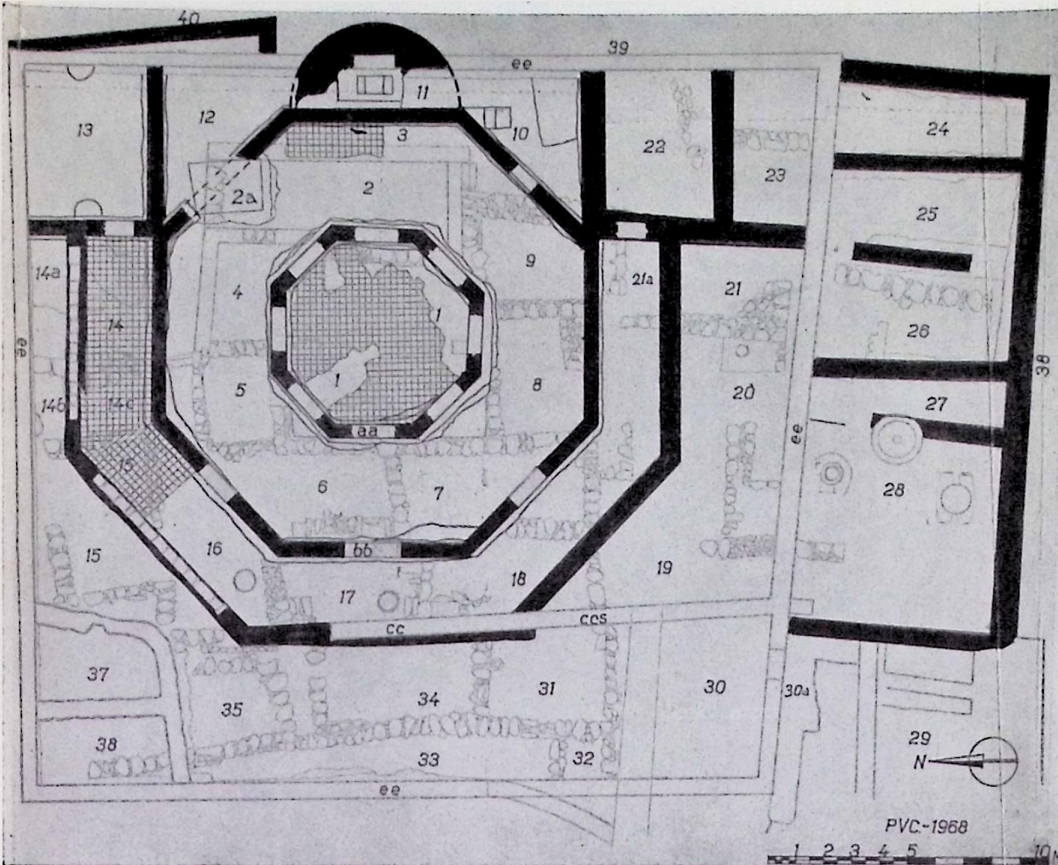
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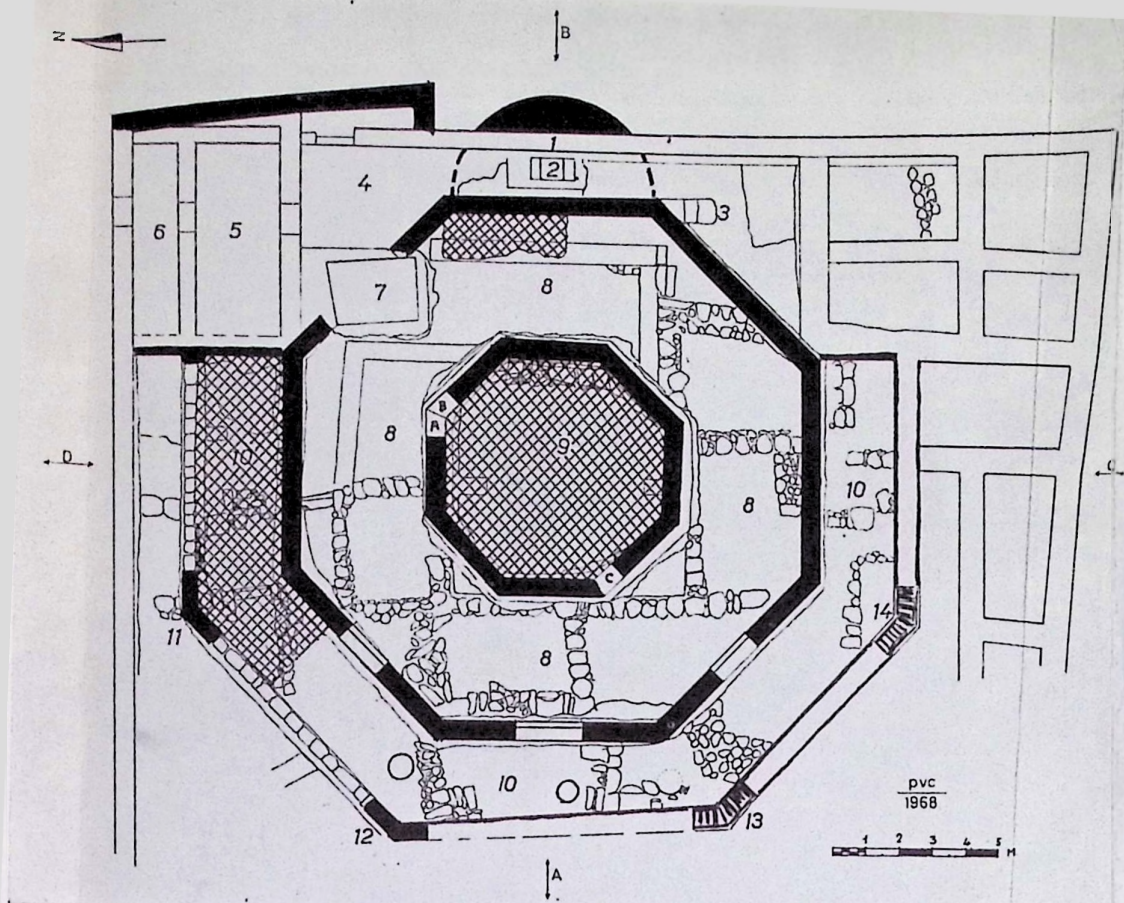
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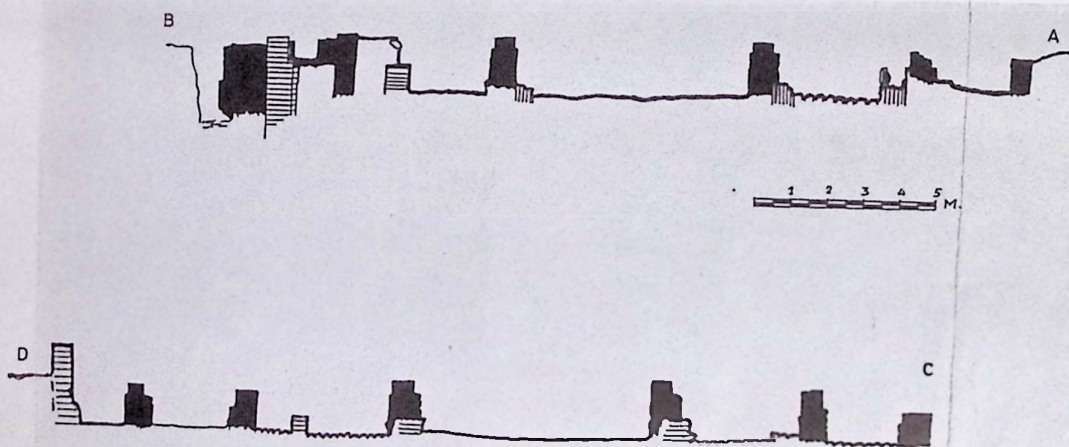
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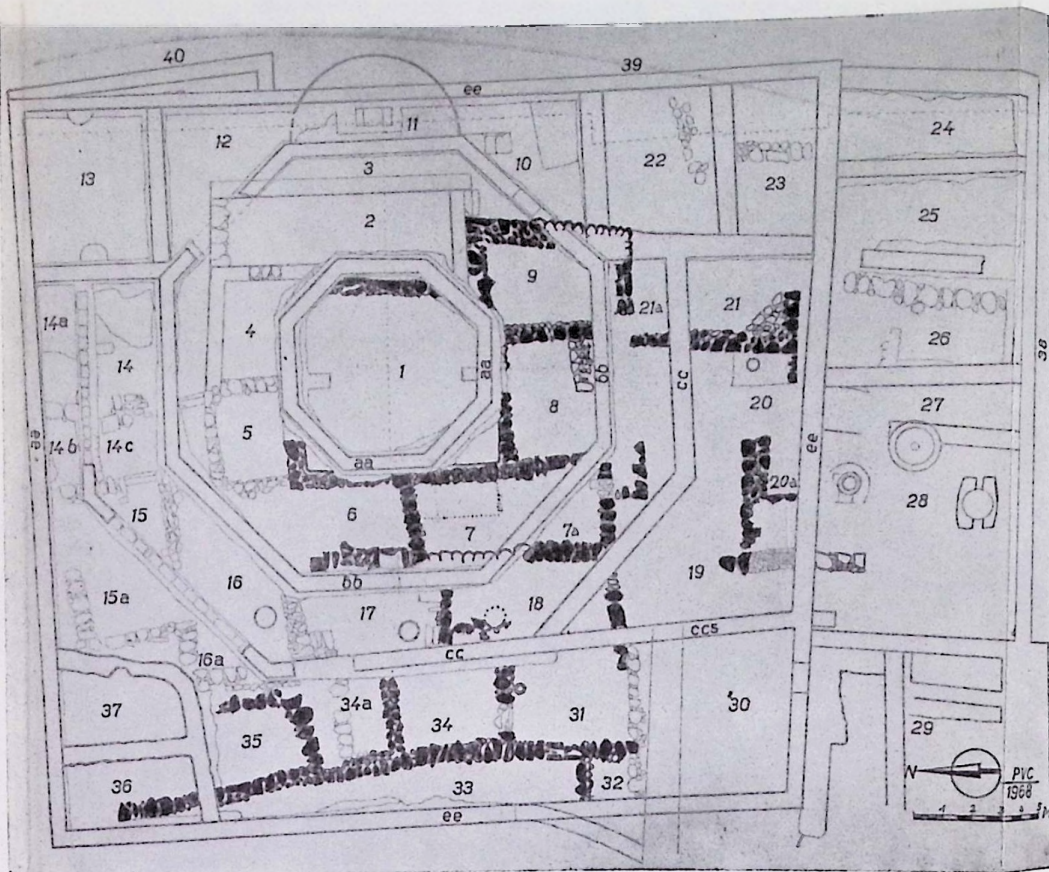
Plan I. The Byzantine church (in black) and dependencies.



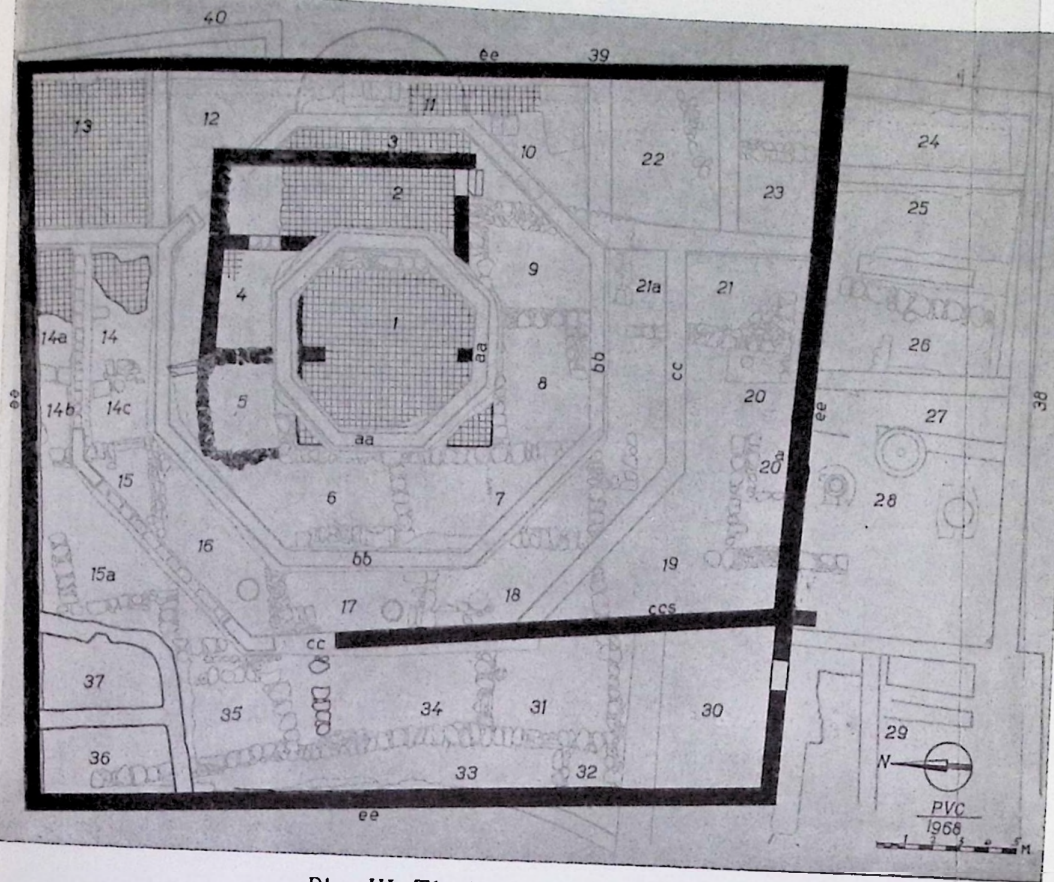
PLAN I A. The Byzantine church (in black) after the first campaign of excavations.



Sections A-B and C-D on plan IA. The vertical lines indicate the habitations of the first century; the horizontal lines, the house church; solid black, the Byzantine octagon.



Plan II. The habitations of the first century A.D. (in black).



Plan III. The house church (in black).

